

SERMONS,

BY

The Rev. THOMAS HARWOOD,

LATE OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AND

MASTER OF LICHFIELD SCHOOL.

Ἀρχὴ δ' ἀρίστη πάντων τῶν ὄντων Θεός, ἀρίων δ' εὐσέβεια.

PHILO DE DEC. PRÆCEPT.

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THE TWO SISTERS

BY MRS. J. W. B. B. B.

NEW YORK

1832

NEW YORK

TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
JOHN, EARL OF DARNLEY,
BARON CLIFTON, &c. &c.

MY LORD,

THE following Sermons
were delivered chiefly to a country
congregation, to assist the under-
standing, by illustrating the sublime
truths of divinity, and to amend the
heart by enforcing the practical du-
ties of piety and morality.

No one who is acquainted
with the accomplishments of your
Lordship's mind, and with the ele-

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gance

gance of your manners, can wonder for a moment that I should wish to shelter myself under the reputation of a Nobleman, whose virtues so peculiarly dignify, and whose abilities so eminently distinguish him.

BUT I have another more agreeable motive for this address; which is, that I may thus testify my gratitude for the kindness which you have shewn me, and my obligations for the favours which you have voluntarily bestowed on me.

I AM, MY LORD,

YOUR LORDSHIP'S OBLIGED,

AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THOMAS HARWOOD.

LICHFIELD, *December*, 1793.

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SERMON I.

On the DIVINE OMNIPRESENCE.

JEREMIAH xxiii. 23, 24.

Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.—

THERE is no principle of religion more firmly established, more universally approved, or more uniformly supported, than the being of a God. However various are the opinions of the world upon other subjects, or however the dispositions of men incline to contest and dispute, yet those only who have not accurately surveyed the works of nature, who have not sufficiently considered the beauty and harmony of the

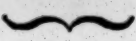
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I.


world, have presumed to deny the existence of a Deity. Some indeed, whose vices expose them to future reprobation, and whose practices render them obnoxious to future punishment, have endeavoured to remove from their thoughts the belief of a holy, a just, and a supreme Being. There are very few, however, over whom this inconsiderate opinion prevails. Many of us very eagerly covet forbidden pursuits, and are so captivated with the allurements of imaginary pleasure, as to wish there was no God to observe us; yet, notwithstanding all our artifices for conviction, our reason is too powerful for the affections to controul, and we believe, although our actions will too often prevent us from properly acknowledging, the Divine Existence.

BUT however general may have been the agreement concerning the being of a God, yet many have disputed his care and providence, and excluded him from all concern in the transactions of human affairs. Some have considered it beneath the magnitude of his power and dignity of his person to notice and superintend the little circumstances of this world; imagining that what was consistent with his wisdom to create, concurred

I

not

not with his honour to regard ; but, that what was the effect of his power, could not, without disgrace, partake of his goodness. —It has been again asserted, that the mediation of God in the government of the world must necessarily disturb him in the enjoyment of himself, and rob him of his peace and tranquility. To a man it may be troublesome and difficult to regulate his temporal affairs : He maybe unable, through the narrowness of his mind, and the weakness of his powers, to direct without labour and difficulty, the complex and various circumstances of things. But God, who is infinitely perfect, whose Almighty Power implies an ability to do whatsoever is possible, and whose infinite knowledge includes an universal prospect of all things past, present, and to come ; can find no perplexity in the government of the world, were its parts ten thousand times more numerous and more intricate. Such is the amplitude of the divine nature, that it reaches over the whole world, and dilates itself to the utmost possibility of extension.

THUS a Heathen philosopher answered this objection against an universal Providence

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dence*, “ God is so vast and superior a Being, that he at once sees and hears all things, is present every where, and regards every thing.” Should we take our abode in the most unfrequented and inhospitable part of a wilderness, even there would his hand lead us, and his right hand would hold us. Should we confine ourselves in the solitary cave of a melancholy anchorite; should we ransack all the privacies of nature, and veil ourselves with the grossest darkness and obscurity, we cannot be sequestered from God. Heaven and Hell are within his cognizance; nor can the bright lustre of one, nor gloomy darkness of the other, screen us from his sight; † *whither shall I go then from thy spirit, says the Psalmist, or whither shall I flee then from thy presence? Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? —*

* Τοσῶτον καὶ τοιῶτον εἶσι τὸ θεῖον ὥστ’ ἅμα ἅπαντα ὁρᾶν, καὶ πάντα ἀκρίβειν, καὶ πανταχῶς παρῆναι, καὶ ἅμα πάντων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι.

SOCRATES IN PLATO.

† Psalm cxxxix. 7.

IT

IT cannot be very difficult to prove, that whatsoever exists of itself must be without cause; and that which has no cause, can have no bounds or limits of being. That which exists of itself, must (if it has any) be its own cause; but we cannot suppose, without a contradiction, that which is of itself to be the cause of itself; for every cause must be before its effect. That then, which is of itself, be it God, or whatever else we call it, must be infinitely extended without any bounds of existence; for what is there to limit or restrain it? As God is this self-extending Being, he must necessarily be of an unlimited essence, an essence which no possible space can either circumscribe or define, but be diffused through the whole, and actually present with all things. And that he is this self-existing Being, the Scriptures afford ample and satisfactory proof, in all those passages which assert his eternity and infinite power,—* *That before the mountains were brought forth, or even the earth or the world were made, thou art from everlasting, and world without end;—and, that by him all things were created that are in*

* Psalm xc. 2.

† Coloss. i. 16.

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heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers. This is fully confirmed in many other passages of Scripture, inasmuch as his eternity supposes him without any antecedent cause.

BUT this argument may be rendered less abstruse, if we endeavour to prove the Divine Omnipresence from the evidence of Scripture, which is the privilege and triumph of a Christian's belief. *If I ascend up into heaven, says David, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.* The same would God have us understand of himself, when, in threatening the utter destruction of Jerusalem, he tells us by his prophet, **that though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven thence will I bring them down; and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them.* † Thus So-

* Amos. IX. 3.

† 1. Kings VIII. 27.

lomon emphatically insinuates ; *thus Zophar, the Naamathite, in his questions to Job ; †and thus the apostle St. Paul, in his speech to the Athenians. ‡Hymns of thanksgiving, and songs of gladness were offered at the time of placing the Ark in the Temple, in the days of Solomon, as an instance of the Divine Omnipresence : God was highly pleased at this homage, for he then filled the house with a visible symbol of his presence. §It was again practised in the days of Hezekiah, when he restored religion, and made an offering of atonement for all Israel ; ||and again, when they kept the passover which he appointed. ¶It was practised in the days of Nehemiah, at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem ; **in the days of Ezra, when they laid the foundation of the second temple ; and also, at the time of removing the Ark from Kirjath Jearim.††

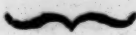
REASON, without the aid of Scripture, might convince us of the necessity of God's Presence in every place to answer the pur-

* Job xi. 7, 8, 9. † Acts xvii. 27. ‡ 2 Chron. v. 13.

§ 2 Chron. xxix. 27. || 2 Chron. xxx. 21. ¶ Nehem. xii. 27.

** Ezra iii. 10. †† 1 Chron. xiii. 8.—1 Chron. xv. 16.

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I.


poses of religion. If he were really at a distance from us, and compelled by frequent and alternate visits to supply the defect of an universal Presence, we must sometimes be without his care, and sometimes supplicate his protection in vain. It would thus in some degree remove, and probably extinguish our hope in him, our dependence on him, and our prayers to him. He would then, neither remark our conduct, nor discover our transgressions, and consequently be unable either to reward our good, or to punish our evil performances. We should then, with the hopes of impunity, be inclined to comply with every temptation, which the charms either of pleasure or of profit might suggest ; we should be indifferent to his service, and inattentive to his commands ; and how little such a partial presence can answer the necessities of men, and the promises of God, is too manifest either to be doubted or denied.

BUT, if God be a Being who is always with us, and wherever we are surrounds us with his boundless Presence ; who includes and penetrates every part of our substance ; who sees into our inmost thoughts, and remotest

moteft purposes ; and who has a perfect and unerring prospect of all our affairs ; he will hear our complaints, and remove our troubles ; he will affist us in all our trials, ° animate our hopes, and listen to our prayers. When we know that he is nigh to all that call upon him ; that he hears our petitions ; that he is fo intimately present with every thing, as there is not a word in our tongue but he knows it altogether ; that the clofeft whispers of our souls are audible to him ; it will exhilarate our confidence, and stimulate our devotion ; it will vifibly influence our practice ; it will at once inflame us with the ardour of virtue, and convince us of the importance of truth. But if he were finite and circumscribed within certain local limitations, what an improper object of prayer would he be ? How, under fuch restrictions, could he hear the petitions of different men in different countries, who are all perhaps at the fame moment imploring his bleffings in their own vernacular language ? Ufelefs and unprofitable would they be, as the prayers to departed faints, or inanimate idols. But what greater encouragement to prayer can be expected or defired than the certainty and affurance of attention ?

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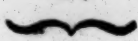
I.


attention? and as a sense of the Divine Omnipresence is a powerful incitement to ask, so it is to ask with devotion. To consider that it is in his immediate presence, who alone can answer us, and to whose eyes all things are open, we shall be fearful of indifference or coolness in our addresses to him, from whom alone we can reasonably expect relief, and to whom all our thoughts and actions are equally manifest. Surely God will not thus prostitute his blessings, and cast them on him who so little values them. To the importunate and devout, to the zealous and affectionate, he lends a willing and benevolent ear: to the cool and the indifferent, to the lax and the inattentive, he is distant and inexorable. With these considerations, we shall be impelled to cast from us all negligence and reserve; to attend our public worship not in compliance with the caprices of fashion, or the impatience of opinion; but from a firm and unshaken conviction of the Divine Omnipresence; not use it as a cloak to vanity or dissimulation, but as an incentive to purity of thought, as the promoter of integrity of manners, and as the exemplar of orderly practice, and christian conversation. Under
such

such reflections, it would be no longer a task, but a privilege, to perform our morning and evening sacrifice; to offer our thanksgiving to him who made us, and all things, and who still upholds us; who sees the posture of our souls as well as of our bodies, and who regards not an external reverence without internal devotion. Whenever, therefore, we are moved with a sense of our own infirmities, and a conviction of our own dependence, let us deeply impress our minds with a vigorous apprehension of God's Universal Presence, that he observes and regards both our outward and inward behaviour, and will recompence the devotion of a fervent christian. If there were no law, there could be no transgression: but we have not so learned Christ; who in his gracious dispensation has established it, and will punish with severity every violation of it. **Walk before me*, says God to Abraham, *and be thou perfect*; intimating, that in attending to one, he would attain the other; and from a sense of God's presence, carefully proceed in the ways of his commandments. Whenever our companions solicit us to intemperance, or our

* Genesis xvii. 1.

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I.


own heart is seduced with the allurements of sin; whether the temptation proceed from the suggestion of our own fancy, or from the sollicitation of others: if we are warned, that God, who forbids our compliance, under the penalty of his displeasure, is present with us, that he is about our paths, and about our beds, and spies out all our ways; we should rarely yield to such slavish suggestions, but, on the contrary, be pressed to a regular conversation by all the arguments of ingenuity and danger. It may daily be perceived how respected is the presence of an honest and a pious man: how many vicious inclinations it restrains, how many irregularities it prevents, and how much circumspection is necessary to screen us from the severity of his observation. If a fellow-creature be thus able to influence our conduct, to controul our passions, to curb the levity, the presumption, or the insolence of our conversation, the sense of the continual presence of God, our Great Creator, who fills all places, and circumscribes all things, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with delight, will much more interest our behaviour, and render our works worthy of the regard of
the

the Spectator of all men.—*The iniquity of the House of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness; *because, say they, the Lord hath forsaken the earth, the Lord seeth not.* Thus it was in the time of David and of Job: for they say, †*who shall see them?* ‡*God hath forgotten; he hideth away his face; he will never see it.* §*How should God perceive it?* *is there knowledge in the most High?* ||*Can he judge through the dark cloud?* *Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.* Thus concluding against the inspection and knowledge of God, they may pursue the ways of wickedness without fear or restraint. What indeed, should curb the vicious inclinations of men, and what should prevent the commission of private sins, when all apprehensions of God's presence are laid aside, and they are secure also from civil discoveries? From man they can dread no punishment of their private transgressions, and if they are persuaded that God has abandoned the world, and

* Ezra ix. 9.

† Psalm LXIV. 5.

‡ Psalm x. 11.

§ Psalm LXXIII. 11. || Job xxii. 13.

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I.

takes no cognizance of human affairs, they cannot fear the wrath of the Almighty.

BUT, as the apprehension of the Divine Omnipresence tends to the regulation and well-government of our lives, so does it likewise prompt to uprightness and sincerity of our actions. What, though we pretend to a nicer conscience in worship, and would thus pass in the opinion of the world as more devout than others, by making long prayers ; yet, if these are only for a pretence, *that we may more effectually devour widows' houses, it is so far from rendering us acceptable to God, that it subjects us to severer condemnation. It is not, therefore, the mere conformity of our practice with the rules for our conduct, which God wholly regards, but he requires truth likewise in the inward parts. We must have the temper of Nathaniel to form the true Israelite. With holy David, therefore, let us endeavour †to set the Lord always before us ; to possess our minds with a lively and vigorous sense of his presence, wheresoever we are, and whatsoever we are doing ; and be assured that he is a constant witness,

* Matthew XXIII. 14.

† Psalm XVI. 8.

and

and a vigilant spectator of all our actions. We shall then readily and openly apply to him in all our wants and necessities; in the obedience of our lives, as well as in the sacrifice of our lips: and address him with that fervour and devotion which can alone recommend our prayers. And though on account of the spirituality of his essence, he is not always in our sight; yet the belief of his Omnipresence will have the same excellent effect; that he is listening to what we say, observing whatever we do; that he keeps intelligence with our thoughts, and is intimately assured of all our designs; that he is, as it were, standing by us in a visible Shechinah, to record every passage of our life, and to register every thought of our heart, against the final and solemn Day of Retribution.

SERMON II.

On forming a just Opinion of our NEIGH-
BOURS and OURSELVES.

LUKE xiii. 2, 3.

Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.—

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II.

SO weak is the nature, and so prejudiced is the prevailing disposition of mankind, that the character of their neighbour is commonly estimated from the present circumstances of his outward condition. They account those only religious and virtuous, whose ambitious views terminate in conquest, and whose temporal designs are finally successful; whilst the unfortunate

nate bear the charge of evil, and imputation of impiety. An inference thus formed, an opinion so hastily and inconsiderately concluded from such uncertain and improper principles of knowledge, must be necessarily erroneous. Were prosperity and honours the certain portion of piety and virtue, or misery and affliction the inevitable consequence of vice and irreligion, they might then with sufficient reason advance the outward circumstances of life as the standard of their opinion, and estimate their neighbour's virtues from his temporal enjoyments. But as experience will teach us that the wicked sometimes flourish, while many are the afflictions of the righteous, **who are fed with the bread of adversity, and water of oppression*; grossly are they deluded who consider the smiles of success, or the frowns of misfortune the infallible criterion of morality. Light and inconstant must he be who thus grounds his opinion on the instability of human affairs, on the casualties of events, and the revolution of temporal pursuits.

** Isaiah xxx. 20.*

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II.

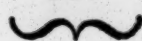
To judge, indeed, seems not only the greatest privilege, but the specific distinction of man. It is by no means criminal in itself; for those *passages of Scripture which forbid judging, are to be understood of rash and uncharitable censures. To him who looks through a red glass every thing appears of the same colour; it is not, therefore, possible to pronounce righteous judgment from external appearances. This was what led the Jews into such absurd and uncharitable mistakes concerning Christ. They were so bigotted to the ceremonies of their law, that they could not with patience admit an innovation, although for its improvement. They were so disaffected to his person, that in all his miracles they pretended to discover no divine power: and while †*he did among them the works which no man ever did before*, yet they were censured as magic and imposture, and himself branded with marks of infamy and ridicule.

THOSE who judge of causes from their success, and of persons from their fortunes,

* Mat. vii. 1.—Rom. xxi.—1 Corinth. iv. 5.—James iv, 11.

† John xv. 24.

both



both from the suffrage of common observation, and the evidence of Scripture, may be said to use, though not always a false, yet always an uncertain rule of argument. The *Israelites were discomfited at their first assault upon Ai, and successful afterwards ; it was something extrinsic to the cause that made the variation, for they still fought the Lord's battle. The Benjamites† though in as ill an engagement as can well be imagined, yet boasted two victories over the other tribes ; and ‡Absalom compelled his father to flee his kingdom. But the authority of this rule will be sufficiently decried (unless the preference be given to Dagon, who triumphed in the spoils of the God of Israel) when we instance the §slaughter of the Israelites, by the Philistines, and the capture of the Ark. When one Achan, by his sacrilege, may expose the cause of God ; when, by the profaneness of a Hophni and a Phineas, the Ark may be forfeited, success can never determine the merits of a cause.

THIS way of judging is equally deceitful with respect to persons||. In the days

* Joshua vii. and viii.
§ 1 Sam. iv.

† Judges xx.
|| Job xxi.

‡ 2 Sam. xv.

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of Job the wicked were mighty in power; David* saw the ungodly in much prosperity; †Jeremiah desired to expostulate with God, concerning the reason of his indulgence to wicked men; and ‡Habbakkuk laments their treachery and success. But we have no need to consult the days of old, and the years that are past; our own age will afford instances sufficient to confirm this truth, that greatness and goodness do not always associate. Equally unsafe is it to make the misfortunes of other men the measure of our judgment. This conduct was severely condemned by our Saviour in the text, as an undue process in the Jews, in the case of the Galileans. As this method was not allowable under the Jewish economy, where temporal evils were so often denounced as the punishment of sin; much less is it under the gospel, where misery seems to be entailed upon virtue, and persecution almost the necessary fate of Christians. This partiality of judgment the text virtually condemns. § *Are not your ways unequal?* said God to Israel on another subject; which also is observable in the ge-

* Psalm lxxiii.

† Habb. i. 13.

† Jerem. xii. 1.

§ Ezek. xviii. 25.

neral conduct of the Jews. Jesus wrought a cure on the sabbath day, and the Jews censured him as a prophaner of that holy rest, when they themselves in compliance with the law of Moses, circumcised on that day, if it happened to be the eighth after the birth of the child. He therefore argues, if a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be violated, are ye angry with me for restoring a man to health on the sabbath-day? Is it more profanation in me to cure than in you to wound on that day?

SUCH was the temper of the Jews in the text. As soon as they heard of the disaster of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, they condemned them as the most impious of the sect, because the most unfortunate; and pronounced their own innocence, because they were not sharers in the calamity. He whose observation has extended to the different degrees of human life, will frequently have remarked the fallacy and credulity of this opinion; that the afflictions of men are applied as convincing arguments of their sins; at the same time, their ease and

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security, their possessions and opulence are popular proofs of their piety. But does God never purify the righteous by temporal calamities, or does he never reserve the wicked for future judgment? Is it, that he who securely riots in his iniquity, however enormous, claims an undoubted title to the favour of God, and the remission of his sins? Does he fondly flatter himself that he only is righteous, and does he magisterially pronounce those criminals, who probably are less impious, though more unfortunate? **Who art thou that condemnest another, thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, if not worse, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God, because he inflicteth not immediate punishment for thy transgressions?*

It cannot be denied that the wicked sometimes in this world sustain the weight and endure the agonies of affliction. Were the evil of temporal misery the sole product of the evil of sin, we might with confidence aver, that the greatest sufferer was the greatest sinner. But, as the good sometimes share the miseries of life, if

*Rom. ii. 3.

from

from the greatness of the sufferings we asserted the heinousness of the sufferer, by too bold and uncharitable an inference, we should condemn those we ought to commiserate, and offend against the generation of God's children, who are frequently tried in the furnace of adversity, that *he may purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

OUR Saviour assured his disciples, that **in this world they should have tribulations.* Not that he necessarily entailed misfortunes on the professors of his doctrine, or that the character of christianity is not complete without suffering martyrdom; but by warning his disciples of calamities, to which their faith would eminently expose them, he might disengage their affections from the pleasures and allurements of the world, and inspire them with a fortitude of mind, which would enable them patiently and cheerfully to take up the cross.

VARIOUS are the instances, both from sacred and profane history, which might be

* John xvi. 33.

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enumerated in confirmation of this truth ; that persecution frequently pursues the innocent, and that the ridicule of the world very commonly attends the generation of the just. When Abel had received the divine approbation of his offering, which was a testimony of his obedience and righteousness, envy exerted all her malevolence, and mischief all her virulence, to sacrifice him to fraternal resentment. Our Saviour and his apostles are sufficient instances of afflicted innocence. Must they, therefore, be numbered among sinners, and deserve the hatred of God, because they suffered such things ? If the master of the house were thus treated, can those of the household expect better entertainment ? * *If they have persecuted me, says Christ, they will also persecute you.* This was abundantly experienced by the apostles ; their lives were a progressive series of calamities, an epitome of human misery. They were pursued in all their journies by the rage and fury of the people. † Bonds and afflictions oppressed them in every city ; and, together with them, the rest of the christian proselytes. Nor were these days of sorrow and

* John xvi. 20.

† Acts xx. 23.

persecution

persecution confined to the infancy of the church ; but as the number of christians increased, increased also the malice of their opponents.

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WERE temporal blessings infallible marks of innocence, from the general prosperity of things and temporal enjoyments of men, we might invariably conclude their piety and virtue. There would then need no peculiar discernment to discover the designs of the knave, and the arts of the hypocrite. The mask of religion, which is so often advantageously worn, would benefit no man, nor answer the ends of the crafty and fraudulent. We may only consult the fortune of our neighbour to be satisfied either with the guile or sincerity of his actions ; because he is prosperous we may securely repose on his honesty, and from his gain, confidently presume that he is godly. But we have not so easy or evident signs of human integrity. Honesty is not known by the fortune, but by the practice of men ; not the fairest estate, but the fairest dealing discovers the native sincerity of virtue. To measure our opinion by these outward blessings, would dispute the evidence which Scripture and experience affords us.

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To mention only the instance of Nebuchadnezzar. How large were his conquests, how prosperous his undertakings, and how insolent his demeanour; so profane was he, even amidst the solemnity of devotion, that he was deprived of his empire by the hand of God, who abandoned him human society, to correct his pride and teach him obedience. Thus the moral excellence of man cannot be attributed to wordly success, however exalted may be the rank, or popular the character. Barbarous and inhuman is it then to triumph over the calamities of the unfortunate; mean and disingenuous is the disposition which renders those miseries that demand compassion, the objects of ridicule and contempt. **Provoke not a man in his distress, and add not more trouble to a heart that is vexed.* The noble soul will sympathize with his afflicted neighbour, and not only *†rejoice with them that rejoice, but weep also with them that weep.* The generous Heathens esteemed pity a debt to their very enemies, and disdained to triumph over those whom misfortune had rendered miserable. With what courtesy and indulgence

* Eccl. iv. 2. 3.

† Rom. xii. 15.

did Alexander treat his prisoners, the mother, the wife, and the daughter of Darius*. Instead of insulting those unfortunate women, he studied the most agreeable entertainments to divert their thoughts from too hard a sense of their captivity. Cæsar wept at the death of Pompey, though his enemy, and sacrificed to his ghost his treacherous murderer.† With such instances of humanity and pity profane history is plentifully supplied, and similar examples may be quoted from the sacred records. ‡ David lamented the death of his enemy Saul, as well as of his friend Jonathan. § The Samaritan did not exult over the wounded Jew, though they differed both in polity and religion, *but when he saw him, he had compassion on him.*

But besides the inhumanity of those who deride the calamities of others, their vanity and presumption are equally culpable. None are in a state of unalterable security; the scene may suddenly change and level them with the most humble and unfortunate. What can they then expect from others,

* Quintus Curtius. † Suetonius in Vit. Cæs. ‡ 2 Sam. i.

§ Luke x. 30.

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but the measure which they before did mete? The case of the Jews is an illustrious instance of this truth. When they triumphantly recited to our Saviour the disaster of the Galileans, they enjoyed a profound and (as they thought) a perpetual security; they suspected no change of fortune, and the thoughts of misery were distant from them. But within the space of fourscore years the posture of affairs was altered, and happy as they were, they became the most wretched spectacles of the creation. Many thousands perished by famine, and by the sword: their city was taken, sacked, and demolished; and Jerusalem made an heap of stones. The surviving part of the nation was exposed as vagabonds, to the ignominy and contempt of those, whom they had before treated not only with marked disrespect, but with arrogance, derision, and cruelty.

SUCH was the fatal revolution of the Jewish affairs. *Wherefore, let him, who on account of his present prosperity thinketh he standeth firm and secure, take heed by this example that he fall not into the same condition.

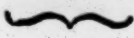
* 1 Cor, x. 12.

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To atone for our various transgressions, and reconcile ourselves to offended justice, we must be impressed with that sorrow which is inseparable from contrition, and exercise that constancy and fortitude which the christian religion both inculcates and demands. For contrition is not principally to repine at the deformity of sin, or to be alarmed at the fear of punishment due to it, which are indications of a pusillanimous mind; it must proceed from having offended God, of having displeased so infinitely good, so infinitely gracious a Creator.

A just apprehension of the danger of vice, is required in those whose contrition would be effectual. To reflect at once on the attributes of God, and on the nature of our own crimes; continually to present to our view the goodness, power, and wisdom, the justice, mercy, and benefits of God, in opposition to our own weakness and ignorance, presumption and ingratitude, negligence and disobedience: and from hence deduce the quality of our offences; that creatures, frail and dependent as ourselves, should dare to despise the decrees of Omnipotence, and affront the Majesty of Heaven. Such reflections

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reflections will excite a profound abhorrence and eternal detestation of vice ; and will animate us with steady and lasting purposes of better obedience. The christian resolution of amendment of life is indebted to these considerations for its original source.

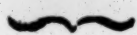
As such is the nature of repentance, which, through the merits of Christ, is the only guide of our reconciliation with the Father, let us earnestly and speedily commence this great, this necessary work ; and consider that it is not a slight, cold, and faint confession which will obtain absolution from God, or purchase his pardon : but a sincere and hearty sorrow, arising from a just apprehension of our sins, with a vigorous and firm resolution of future obedience. Let us consider the imprudence of delaying, and the danger of declining this urgent and important task. Without repentance, there can be no remission of sins, and consequently no reasonable hopes of salvation : how inconsiderate then must he be, who trifles away his youth in vanity and pleasure, and designs his old age only for a state of penance, the dregs of his life for a sacrifice

fice to his Maker. When, alas! it is impossible to determine the limits of his own life; when he can assure himself only of the present moment. In what a miserable condition must he be, if the night should suddenly overtake him, surprise him in his wickedness, and prevent his repentance! Were he even to attain his desired old age, what an improper and unseasonable time is that for repentance? To be then sorry for sin, when he can no longer enjoy it; to resolve then against vice, when he can be no more vicious. It will be his infirmity, not his choice, which preserves his honesty; it will be to the decays of nature, not to the improvements of grace, that his resolutions of abstaining from vice arise. The sincerity of his repentance must be very suspicious, who then begins to declaim against vice, when age has debilitated his nature and impaired his faculties, but when strength and vigour assisted him, who not only complied with eagerness, but courted with fondness, every temptation.

FROM the consideration of the uncertainty of our lives, of the necessity of repentance, and of the improbability of old age properly

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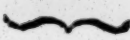
properly to perform it, let us hasten our reconciliation with God; nor presumptuously delay this necessary duty. Let us no longer be flattered with our present security, but frequently meditate on the goodness of the Lord, and impartially enquire into our own hearts, if we have made any return for the benefits which he daily affords us. Nor let us wilfully neglect or wantonly despise the motives to repentance, and thus obstinately rebel against the voice of reason, and the warning of religion: that we may not at last find ourselves miserably deluded; and sensibly experience, that the severity of the punishment abundantly compensates the slowness of its execution.

IT is thus unquestionably evident, that the external circumstances of life are no infallible indications of virtue or vice; we are therefore naturally interdicted from uncharitably censuring the afflictions of the miserable, or boldly presuming on the piety of the fortunate. But we are exhorted to regard our own ways; and endeavour to reconcile ourselves to God, by
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an early and serious repentance. Therefore let us compassionate the afflicted, and rejoice with the prosperous: and while it is called to day, hear the voice of the Lord inviting us to happiness; that if we cannot avoid the misfortunes of this life, we certainly may escape the punishment of the next.

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SERMON III.

On the LOVE of our ENEMIES.

MATTHEW V. 44.

But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.

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WHEN a philosopher was asked what was most agreeable to the nature of man, and what most delighted the generality of the world, he answered, like one who was little acquainted with the principles of christianity, that it was revenge. How contrary was this reply to the injunctions of our Saviour, who commands us to turn the left cheek to him that strikes us on the right, to receive insults with patience, and

and to use the shield instead of the sword ! But if this subject be impartially considered, it will be found that the men of the world for the most part subscribe to the philosopher's opinion. They approve of none without their passions, and condemn him who dares not to challenge an enemy into the field.

WHILE the practice of revenge is so popular, and its advocates so numerous, reason and moderation will cease to be the property of men. So wanton a derogation from the meekness and lowliness of Christ ; so direct a breach of his positive precepts requires the utmost refinement of argument to defend, and the nicest subtlety to justify. However highly we may approve of the excellence of this command, all admiration of it will be vain, if our practice concur not with our opinion. How frequently this injunction is violated, common experience will inform us. Instead of loving our enemies, how often do we hate and abhor them : and although we are enjoined to pray for them, how frequently do our curses extend even beyond the grave !

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UNDER the law was required satisfaction for injuries ; an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth ; an ill turn was surely thrown back upon him that offered it ; and to give one affront was the preface of receiving another. Christ came from heaven to refine and to purge, not to abrogate the old law, and in his excellent sermon on the mount, he enumerates many things which could by no means be tolerated in his Gospel. It is there said, thou shalt not commit adultery ; but he tells us, there is adultery in the very eye. It is there said, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but perform unto the Lord thine oaths ; but he strongly enforces the obligation of the third commandment, he allows not the least sufferance of taking his name in vain, but commands us to make *Yea* and *Nay* the only ornaments of our discourse. He concludes with this great and weighty precept, which at first seems to cross the very inclination of our nature, in the words of the text.

A peculiar encouragement to this practice may be taken from the example of Christ, the gentle and meek deliverer of the precept ; who descended from the bosom
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of his father to die for his most inveterate enemies; even for those men who endeavoured to take away his life, almost as soon as he entered the world. He has enjoined nothing but what he performed himself with the utmost exactness and purity. To love our enemies had truly been a painful and laborious task, if he, who was a man as we are, and subject to similar infirmities, had not commanded us by loving him. It is an eminent instance of the amiable patience of Jesus, that he resented no insult, punished no persecution or cruelty exercised against his own person: that he opened his mouth, not to calumniate and revile, but in blessings and prayers; and that he exerted no authority against them, but the performance of miracles. The novelty of his doctrines, and the boldness of his opposition to the vanities of the world, provoked his enemies to reproach the innocence and purity of his life, the modesty and humility of his manners, his inoffensive and harmless conversation. But he returned not evil for evil; although he might have prayed to his father, who would instantly have sent more than twelve legions of angels to rescue him from their hands; or, as St. James

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and St. John desired, like Elias, he might have commanded fire from heaven to consume them. But when Judas brought the multitude to apprehend him, he permitted not the misguided zeal of Peter to execute its purpose. He allowed not the servant to bear about him the marks of unmerited resentment, or to endure the shame and agony of his wound; but with a touch alone restored the ear which Peter had cut off to its former soundness. Such was his charity, that while bleeding upon the cross, wounded with our sins, as well as with the sins of those who were the authors and contrivers of his death, such was his charity, as to desire his father to forgive them, and to impute their cruelty to their ignorance, *for they know not, says he, what they do.* Notwithstanding, however, Christ has reasonably commanded us to regard this precept from the example of his own conduct, we are angry with goodness itself, we call him a hard master, he imposes what is intolerable for flesh and blood to sustain, and impossible to perform.

MANY are there, who not only let the sun go down upon their wrath, but hate
their

their enemy to the day of their death ; and will not be reconciled, when he is not capable of wronging them. They make their private caprices survive even his funeral, in despising, if not in pursuing his posterity with revenge. And as though it were not already sufficient, their malice is indulged even to survive themselves, by bequeathing it as a legacy to their own : and in that punctilio of time, in which they should be mindful of reconciling their souls to the Almighty, they cannot be persuaded to admit of any reconciliation with men. Thus they are wont to argue with themselves,—Can I cherish the goad within my side ? Can I delight in the thorns that continually torment me, or in those furies that would incessantly lash me ? Love our enemies ! Surely Christ would not prescribe so unreasonable a duty ? To love my enemy is to be an enemy to myself, to oppose the established course of nature, and inconsistent with the temper of the soul. To sustain one injury is only to invite another ; to do good to him that hates me, and always seeks occasion to oppress me, is absurd and irrational, and the world would laugh at my conduct.

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THESE are arguments, which those consulting only with flesh and blood, are willing to raise against Christ and his precepts. It may indeed be confessed to be difficult to a man in the humiliating state of his natural condition; but very easy and pleasant to him who is instituted in christianity, and whose soul is refined and enlightened by the spirit of God; to him who is earnest to live for ever with the blessed Jesus in heaven, where the depravity of his nature shall be removed, and no contention appear but that of obeying the Almighty.

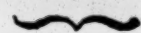
WE do not wonder that so uncommon a duty should be unintelligible to a heathen, whom the blind conduct of natural religion directs; but that those who have so exact a pattern of love to our enemies in the birth, life, and passion of Jesus, should continue to foment the miseries of perpetual discord and insatiable revenge, would seem a paradox inexplicable indeed, did not daily observation convince us.

THAT our Saviour in his birth was an amiable pattern of miraculous love to his enemies

enemies, cannot be doubted. He, who could leave his father's kingdom, with all its glory ; who could forsake the blessed society of angels ; cast away his crown and sceptre, and condescend to be born of a woman ; he, who could measure heaven and earth with his span, to become a child of a span long ; he, who was before all time, to be born in time ; these are instances of his transcendent love sufficiently important and interesting. For his enemies, inveterate and powerful, he submitted to these changes ; leaving heaven for earth, glory for dishonour, adoration of angels for shame and ignominy ; rejecting a sceptre for a reed, and a crown of glory for a chaplet of thorns. And these were enemies, who could by no other means be reconciled to God, than by his patient condescension, and inexpressible affection.

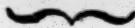
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His unparalleled love for them was eminently conspicuous in his life also ; he thought it not sufficient to be born for them, but lived above thirty years for their instruction. His ministry was a continued journey of benevolence ; healing all that were diseased ; reviving the departed spirit,
and

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and giving sight to the blind ; that they might see and believe on him ; loosing the tongues of the dumb, that they might declare his praise, and confess him to be the Saviour and physician of their souls ; and giving feet to the lame, that they might become his followers. His miracles were so openly performed, and his discourses so boldly delivered, as to appal the malice of his adversaries. So meek was his address, and so admirable the simplicity of his language, that the minds of all might be unprejudiced, and their understandings opened. Publicans and sinners were his daily guests, and familiar companions ; he ate and drank and conversed with them ; and whenever he altered the course of nature, to perform a miracle, it was on their account, that he might win them over to a compliance, and irresistibly compel them to believe on him, whom God had sent to be the Saviour of the world.

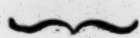
THAT his love to his enemies might be complete, he patiently endured a reproachful and ignominious death upon the cross, terrible to flesh and blood with respect both of the shame and torment. Was any
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sorrow like unto his sorrow? He even there desired his father to forgive those men who would not intreat forgiveness for themselves. But they were so well contented that they had done service in smiting to death the Lord of Life, that they implored his blood on themselves and on their children. Nor did he breathe out his loving-kindness upon the cross, or his love to them there expire, and cease with his life on earth; but he yet retained the same tender affection for mankind. For although at his appearance after his resurrection, he told his disciples that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth; instead of commissioning them to revenge his death, he invested them with no power but that of working miracles, and converting souls; and sent them forth, not to conquer an earthly kingdom with a temporal sword, but to propagate the glorious kingdom of his gospel with the sword of the spirit.

Not only the founder of our religion, but the creator of the world, affords a striking example of this duty, which may be traced in his dealings with the sons of men. He causes the sun to shine upon the just
and

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and upon the unjust alike, and equally scatters his rain upon both. He drops not fruitfulness on the ground of one man, and barrenness on his neighbours; but dispenses his blessings to both in an equal proportion.

** There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.*

The wicked and perjured mariner enjoys a quiet and serene voyage; the bold swearer is not exterminated in the midst of his execrations; nor the drunkard checked in the career of his intemperance. He suffers even the atheist to live and flourish; who denies him a Being, that gives life and being to all; who, with the principles of nature, disputes the existence of the God of nature; and argues against him with that strength of reason which he himself has given him. This caused the heathen to exclaim, that the dealing of the gods with the sons of men is like the flight of an arrow, unsearchable and impenetrable. This caused the prophet to cry out with amazement—

• Ecclef. ix. 2.

Righteous

** Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee, yet let me talk to thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?*

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† David desired to spare Saul, his most inveterate enemy; and when he was dead, ‡ wept over him. St. Stephen, who was the first that sealed the truth of the gospel with his blood, treading in the footsteps of his Saviour, implored God's pardon for those men who contrived and plotted his death. He lifted up his hands for them, whose hands were raised only to cast stones at him, and prayed that the sin might not be laid to their charge. § St. Paul, that eminent champion of christianity, || *died daily*, that is, was in continual fear of death. He was threatened, reviled, stoned, fought with beasts at Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia; he was persecuted by enemies in every country, yet he never resented an injury. The instruction of his great master was always in his eye; who, when he was reviled, did not revile again; when he suffer-

* Jeremiah xii. 1.

† 1 Sam. xxiv. 4.—xxvi. 8.

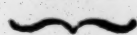
‡ 2 Sam. i. 17.

§ Acts vii. —

|| 1 Cor. xv. 31.

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ed, did not threaten; but submitted in all things to his father's will. **The Lord reward him for it*, said St. Paul, of Alexander the coppersmith, who had done him great injustice. He deprived not God of his prerogative, to offer vengeance to any man. When he was imprisoned and beaten by the jailor, he thought not of retaliation, but sang at midnight in the bottom of the dungeon. So universal was his charity, that not only the same jailor, but his whole household became his profelytes to christianity.

THE same passive valour, calmness of mind, and tranquility of temper, may be found in all the apostles and followers of Christ, in the primitive christians, and martyrs. They never anathematized their enemies, when they were inflicted with the most exquisite torments which malice and cruelty could suggest. With invincible patience they sustained the heaviest calamities, and with the most amiable meekness the bitterest reproaches; praying for those who thus treated them, that they might

* 2 Tim. iv. 14.

find not only more mercy than they shewed, but more mercy than they exercised barbarity.

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ALL the commands of Christ are supported with a consequent reward, both consolatory and extensive, that it would be impious to expect so great a recompence, and not to perform so small a duty. Our trespasses will not be forgiven, unless we heartily and unreservedly forgive others. Envy and malice can never approach those mansions, where nothing but unity and concord are linked together. Thus the poets have consigned the envious to a dwelling in the caverns of the earth, where the sun never appears, but for those dismal effects which it usually produces.

WE are told, that if we only love them that love us, we can expect no reward; because the very publicans and Pharisees can as well perform that duty as the best of christians; and which may be learned as easily in the school of morality as divinity. To do one good turn for another, is only what common neighbourhood requires; to entertain him by whom we know we shall be
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again entertained ; to do a courtesy for him whom we are certain will requite it with another, is receiving our own again, we can expect no other reward. But, when we exercise a kindness towards him whose malice will not permit him to return it but with hatred ; then we become in some degree perfect as our Father which is in heaven ; nothing can more commend us both to the favour of God and man.

It was the saying of an honourable person, that to remit an injury was an act of valour. He would either conquer his enemy by forgiveness, or, as a politician, revenge him by contempt. Though perhaps we may sometimes bestow involuntary praise on the man of spirit, it does not diminish our good opinion of him who disdains a wrong. Ambassadors instead of retaliating an insult, deny an audience : and silence is the royal redress of an injury. And although anger may assume among the vulgar the mask of a man of honour, it is truly the index of an ignoble and pusillanimous soul. Great and generous spirits are like the upper regions of the air, intercepted nor disturbed by clouds, thunder, or tempest ;

tempest ; the storms of revenge only rage in the sordid and degenerate bosom. Shallow waters roar and flow with rapidity, but the deep pass silently away. Not to return an injury, therefore is wise and heroic ; to receive reproaches with patience (in whatever view the world may imagine it) is such a lesson of excellence that a christian may very advantageously learn : it renders an enemy weak and insignificant ; it is itself the severest return to the severest injury, by rendering his malice useless and unavailable. To pardon an enemy when he is at our mercy ; to benefit our malignant adversary, is an imitation of the blessed Jesus, who forgave all men, who suffered all things ; and whose mercies exceed all that the malice of man can suggest, or his cruelty execute. But those, on the contrary, whose enmity is perpetual, too much resemble that desperate Italian, who intended to destroy the soul as well as the body of his enemy, by torturing him to renounce his religion and his God before he slew him.

LET us then be persuaded to live like men who understand the doctrines, and

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who practice the duties of christianity. And if we cannot avoid the ill-will of others, though we do not hate them, let us exercise our patient virtues, conquer our passions, and behave like those who profess the gospel of peace. Thus will our enemies characterize us, as they did the primitive christians,—Behold how they love one another! Let it be our unceasing care that we do not cherish malice within us, which knaws and devours our tranquillity and ease; but strangle it before it arrive at the least growth, that it tempt us not to forfeit our title to the inheritance of the Saints, by perverting our meditations from the exercise of holiness to persecution and cruelty. Let us be persuaded not to return injury for injury, to give one offence for another, and to render evil for evil, but to overcome evil with good. And as we are commanded to love one another, so let us observe and persevere in so excellent a charge, that we may finally attain the reward of it, the salvation of our souls.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

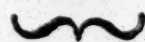
On the NECESSITY and EFFICACY of RELIGIOUS SERVICE.

NEHEMIAH xiii. 22, part.

*Remember me, O my God, concerning this also,
and pardon me according to the greatness of
thy mercy.*

WICKED men in civil, and wicked manners in christian governments, are by various divine and human writers fitly compared to the corrupt humours of the body, and the magistrates to the physicians, to whom the cure belongs. The truth of which is very apparent in this
E 2 chapter.

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chapter. When Nehemiah was established in the government of Jerusalem, the house of God was profaned by Eliashib, who had built a chamber out of those sacred structures, for his kinsman Tobiah. A profanation so notorious, it was his duty to redress. But he applied not to a temporal king, not to Artaxerxes, but to the King of Kings, to the Lord and Monarch of heaven and earth, to whom he had in a peculiar manner performed so exemplary a service. There were some also who had employed the sabbath in the business and merchandise of the world; that day which had been consecrated to purposes the most sacred and spiritual. After he had reformed this abuse, and reproved the delinquents, he again uttered another ejaculation in the words of the text. There is a peculiar harmony in the connection of these words, worthy of Nehemiah, who was so excellent a pattern of piety and wisdom. While he raised the fort of his confidence in the expectation of a blessed reward, he laid the foundation of it upon an humble conceit. Uniting his virtues **in a golden shrine*, and

* St. Peter.



symbolizing his actions, like the elements in compounded bodies. To have only said, "*Remember me,*" would imply much presumption; or only, "*Pardon me,*" might truly have argued a total neglect of christian conversation.

IT has ever been the practice of Satan to invite men into extremes; that if he cannot make them freeze in the dregs, *like the Israelites, he will endeavour to possess them with fiery spirits, †as the brother disciples: if he cannot reduce them by peevishness to vain and needless contention, he will induce them by profaneness to an impious and wicked conversation: either he will work them to a behaviour with the libertine, or to vain ostentation with the Pharisee: they will either become like the covetous miser, or the profuse prodigal. Between these vices is virtue seated; between these extremes is that golden medium to be found; between these rocks is that passage which will conduct to the haven of bliss, eternal life, and happy are they, who, with Nehemiah, can find it.

* Zephaniah i. 12.

† Luke ix. 54.

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BUT it will be first necessary to restrain sin, before a remedy can be sought for it; and to propose to ourselves a reward of piety, before we ask a pardon for our infirmity. *My * little babes, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not; but if any man sin, we have an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous: that is, we should avoid sin, because it is the first and fundamental care of every christian; and only after the commission of it, look up towards the seat of mercy, and apply to the Advocate and Saviour. A careful physician will rather use preserving antidotes to prevent the advance of a disease, than healing medicines to cure it: an industrious sailor will rather endeavour to keep the water out of his ship, than labour to pump it out; so should christians be cautious to commit no offence, rather than intreat pardon for the commission of it; that he should rather by his industry expect a reward with worthy Nehemiah, than by his negligence, look for an indulgence with the slothful and unthrifty servant.*

WHEN the Almighty appeared and spake to the Israelites in Mount Sinai, the mani-

* 1 John ii. 1.

festation of his majesty being too glorious for them to behold, they desired the ministry of Moses. The same infirmity that then changed the ministry changed also the stile of the Almighty. **I speak to you after the manner of men, because of the weakness of your flesh.* The works of God are incomprehensible, therefore the Holy Ghost speaks of earthly things in human phrases, to acquaint us with heavenly things, of which man is ignorant, and from which he is estranged. But is it not enough that the patient receive his cure, although he conceive not the property of every ingredient in the medicine that effects it? If God remember us to our own benefit, let it be expressed in what phrase he shall please, let him shew it by any means which his wisdom may devise, or his power execute, his philanthropy is equally the subject of admiration and gratitude. For, in the administration of all things, with his remembrance there is a recompence, and with his recompence a reward. But, can oblivion be said to be incident to that all-seeing and all-searching Spirit, who can at one glance take unerring and perfect notice

• Romans vi. 19.

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of every object, every action, and every thought. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* and must he be reminded of his servants, that Nehemiah says, *Remember me?* Though angels and men should forfeit the mercy and regard of God, yet he would still continue to be gracious; he would sooner cease to be, than not to be a kind, a tender, and a compassionate father. **He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

SUCH actions and attributes are ascribed to him; not because he wants any thing to assist his infinite memory, but to enlighten the darkness of our understanding, and to assist the weakness of our capacities. We are advised, *in all things to make our case known to God*; not so much to inform him of our wants, but to confirm ourselves in the expectation of a supply. The thief upon the cross no sooner exclaimed, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*, but our blessed Saviour instantly replied, *This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*. He that was a few moments before dumb before his shearer, not having one

* Psalm cxxi.

word

word of defence for himself, or rebuke for his enemies, applied a most comfortable and refreshing balm to the disordered and dying soul. * Martha and Mary sent a message to our Saviour to inform him of the sickness of Lazarus, as the only motive which might recommend their addresses for their expiring brother. They desired not his presence, nor supplicated his aid; it was sufficient to relate their wants, because Christ loved both Lazarus and them. But because he administered no immediate relief, it did not prove that he neglected their information; he deferred to restore him to health, only to raise him from the chambers of death.

IT is not unlawful, whatever may be our condition, in the actions of obedience, whilst we seek the advancement of God's glory, to glance upon our own eternal felicity. Thus Nehemiah, who, as he remembered God in reverence and obedience, desired he might be remembered by a gracious recompence. Various subordinate may concur with principal causes. Moses, the servant of God, looked † *to the recom-*

* John xi. 3.

† Hebrews xi. 14.

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pence of the reward. St. Paul proposed to himself **a crown of righteousness*; and Jesus had an † *eye to the glory that was set before him.*

‡ BEHOLD, even as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, so do the faithful servants of God look up to his hand of direction and benediction. As the earth in its circular motion returns to the point where it began; as all created substances resolve into the matter from which they were framed; and as rivers return their tribute to the ocean from whence they received their streams; so should the actions of men begin in God and end in him, who is alpha and omega. Thus shall he, who is the creator and centre of the soul, be also its rewarder; § honouring us with many honours, while we honour him. All our service, which, like the Pharisees, we tender only to men, is insignificant and vain; but that shall obtain an immortal reward which is consecrated to God, and shall crown us with protection, consolation, and benediction.

* 2 Timothy iv. 8.

† Psalm cxxiii.

‡ Hebrews xii. 12.

§ 1 Samuel ii. 30.

BUT

BUT the peculiar motive which here actuated Nehemiah to offer up his prayers to God, is the observation and sanctification of the sabbath. A concern of much importance, and a duty of great necessity. It may very truly be said, that where the sabbath is not sanctified, there is neither sound religion nor christian conversation. That the strict observation of it is intended, may appear by the exact delivery of the commandment; for it is fenced, like Mount Sinai at the delivery of the law, with its marks and boundaries, that no prophaneness might approach it. It is an assurance and pledge of the everlasting sabbath in the kingdom of heaven, which will be a day of Jubilee, a day without evening, yeilding incessant rest and perpetual joy.

WHEN the Almighty Creator had made the heavens and the earth, he placed men and angels there, that his will might be obeyed, and his power glorified. That talent then, allotted to our charge, must be improved, that we may add something to the Lord's treasury, like the Israelites to the tabernacle. * When Abraham went

* Genesis xxii.

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to offer up Isaac upon Mount Moriah, for a sacrifice to the Lord; * when Moses forsook the pomp and splendor of Pharaoh's court, chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin; † when Obadiah secreted and relieved one hundred of the prophets of the Lord; ‡ when Job caused the loins of the poor to bless him, by cloathing and feeding them; § when Mary Magdalane washed our Saviour's feet and wiped them with the hairs of her head; they might well say, *Remember me, O my God, concerning this.* If he, indeed, || who gives only a cup of cold water for the sake of Christ, receives his assurance of a recompence, what comfort have those who spend their time, their strength, and their estates in the service of God, the conversion of sinners, and relief of the poor? Their reward will be great indeed, ¶ they will shine as the stars in the firmament for ever.

BUT let no phantoms of imagination, no unwarrantable delusions of fancy prevail over the wicked man, or persuade him to

* Hebrews xi.

† 1 Kings xviii.

‡ Job xxxi. 20.

§ John xii. 3.

|| Matthew x. 42.

¶ Daniel xii. 3.

believe

believe that his sins will be forgotten. *As the prayers and alms of Cornelius went up for a memorial before God, †so the pride and luxury of Sodom provoked the divine revenge. Those hard hearted Jews who scoffed at Christ, as well as the tender and compassionate women who wept for him; he who spit in his face, as she that poured the box of ointment on his head, shall be had in everlasting remembrance; some to their immortal honour, others to their perpetual shame. But those who have benefited their generation, who have given instruction to the ignorant, who have alleviated the miseries of the poor, ‡like Dorcas, or the §Centurions, are instruments of the glory of God, and may justly implore his remembrance. Nor are we without instances in our own country of such benevolence, for it may truly be said, that the || fleece of Gideon has been watered as well as his floor. Such characters shall posterity revere, and so long as the gospel of Jesus is preached among us, shall what they have done be their best memorial. Marble and stones shall wear away, and all

* Acts x. 4.

† Genesis xviii. 20.—xix. 13.

‡ Acts ix.

§ Luke vii.

|| Judges vi.

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the emblems of Man's ingenuity shall dissolve; but the books of heaven will remain, where the monuments of their charity are marked in indelible signatures, and will be recompenced with an exceeding great reward, an eternal weight of glory.

LET us endeavour then to improve that talent God has lent us, and do something before we go hence worthy of his remembrance. Let us provide with Joseph in the time of plenty, against the day of scarcity; and while we are upon earth prepare our reception into heaven, * work the works of our father while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work. That † our tomb may be honoured while life lasts, let us, with the Roman, account the day lost in which we have done no good. The hour of death will then be a joyful entrance to eternal life; most dreadful indeed to the wicked, but most welcome to us. Let us therefore consider that our good works only will be our companions to heaven, when every other sublunary possession will vanish

* John ix. 4.

† Τύμβον δὲ βαλομένην ἀν' αἰζύμενον τὸν ἐμὸν ὁρᾶσθαι.

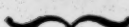
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away

away, as the disciples left our Saviour. They will not only, like Peter, follow us to the judgment hall, but accompany us, plead for us, and acquit us. They will be our honour in life, our comfort in death, and our crown at the last resurrection.

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IT is related of a *noble Roman, that, when his son, contrary to his command, had resolutely encountered an enemy, and obtained an honourable victory, he first crowned him for his valour, and then beheaded him for his disobedience. Thus is it between God and man; whilst there is something to reward, there is also something deserving of punishment. But he is a more merciful father than to be extreme to mark or punish every action of disobedience. This, therefore, caused Nehemiah to add to the former petition, *Pardon me according to thy great mercy*. Not only desiring to be remembered for his good deeds, but to be pardoned also for his frailties; and that God would be pleased to let his remunerative justice prevail over his punitive, and in the midst of judgment to re-

* Manlius Torquatus. Livy. Val. Maximus.

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member mercy. He who indeed considers the daily experience of his own weak nature, the ignorance and inconstancy of his soul, the frailty and instability of his resolution, will readily confess, that though he have good inclinations to many instances of the divine commandments, and may do works for which, like Nehemiah, he may desire the remembrance of God, yet there are omissions and infirmities attached to every man, which require indulgence, and for which also, with Nehemiah, he must appeal for pardon. Every indiscretion, every foolish word and rash answer, every careless action, and indifferent prayer, the weakness of our hands, the fearfulness of our hearts, and the wavering of our faith, are in themselves blameable, and in the rigour of God's justice, punishable. All our righteousness will be found unrighteous, if God should severely enter into judgment. *Who can say that he is clean from his sin? Let him that is innocent among you all, says Jesus, let him cast the first stone at the sinner.* For this reason St. Paul confessed that he was not worthy to be called an apostle, and St. Austin a bishop; the prodigal child that he was not worthy to be called a son,

or

or the woman of Canaan a child ; or the blessed martyrs to be called the servants of God, and witnesses of his truth : the favoured publican feared even to approach his God ; and David, although dignified by divine approbation, called himself a worm, and not a man. There may indeed be some who are clean in their own eyes, who may defend their impiety, and challenge the rest of the world with sin. But, although the Pharisee proudly displayed his best plumes, the publican was more justified in the sight of God. The pride of one carried more contagion with it than the sins of the other. And he, who, like the Pharisee, relies on the merit of his own works, may lose that favour which an humble confidence secures.

FROM the beginning of time, that bounty which flowed from God was an emanation of his goodness, cloathed in variety of circumstances. He created men with a design to make them happy, and, by receiving derivations from the fountain of his mercy, might reflect glory to him. Thus he caused them to be born, that they might be capable of his blessings ; to be baptiz-

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ed, that they might have some title to the glorious promises of the gospel; he gave us his Son, that we might be rescued from destruction. When we conceive him to be harsh in his dispensations, he is then most merciful. He smites us to cure a disease, and he sends us sickness only to administer health. He not only shews the riches of his goodness to those who do well, but to all men, to induce them to do well. Those benefits which he pours upon his children, as election before all time, creation in the beginning of time, vocation, redemption, justification in the fulness of time, and glory after all time, are so many rivers of the bottomless ocean of the never-failing mercy of God. He made man only to save him, and afflicts his person only to preserve his innocence. In punishing Adam he is said ** to walk a soft pace*; but in shewing mercy to the prodigal son, he is said *† to run*: always slow to execute his wrath, and ready to forgive. He will be revenged only on the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, but his mercy shall succeed to thousands of those

* Genesis iii. 8.

† Luke xv. 20.

that

that love him. He contains the sword of his justice within the sheath of his mercy ; and if at any time he is compelled to draw it, he is affected, as it were, with the feeling of that which the wicked suffer. * Ahab, who was a more wicked king than all his predecessors, only humbled himself at the word of the prophet, and the anger of God was appeased. † The old world had so defiled the earth, that God was sorry he had made man ; but there were one hundred and twenty years allowed for repentance. ‡ And when Nineve had multiplied her transgressions as the sand upon the sea shore, he would not come, as a thief in the night, suddenly to destroy her, but gave her a warning of forty days.

LET us then, like Nehemiah, approach his courts with reverence, and prostrate ourselves before the throne of his mercy ; imploring him to pardon our offences, and to blot our sins from his remembrance. And though they be as red as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, and pure as the feet of the holy Lamb ; and though they be as purple which is twice dyed, with origi-

* 1 Kings xviii. 3.

† Genesis vi. 5.

‡ Jonas iv. 1.

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nal depravation in the first lineaments of nature, and with actual transgression, they shall be as white as snow in Salmon. He will bind them together, and cast them into the bottom of the sea. He will remove them as far from us as the East is from the West, or the North from the South. They will be, as though they had never been. Our penitence will be as pure as innocence, to all the effects of pardon and glory; the memory of our sins shall not remain upon record, to be used to any future disadvantage. —

SERMON

SERMON V.

On CONFESSION of SINS.

PROVERBS XXVIII. 13.

*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but
whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall
have mercy.*

IN these words are presented to our view,
the danger of covering or excusing our
sins, and the benefit and advantage of for-
saking them. It is dangerous with respect
both to God and ourselves;—with respect
to God, because it is contrary to his eternal
law; the breach of which will admit of no
excuse.

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WHEN the sons of Aaron had not eaten the goat of the sin-offering *according to the law, and Aaron had made a reasonable excuse, that the sorrow for his two sons Nadab and Abihu, had made him unfit to eat of those holy things, which were to be eaten rejoicing; and when they brought them, they were to say, †*I have not eat thereof in my mourning*; Moses was contented with this excuse, because it was a breach only of the ceremonial law. We are not governed by ceremonies which pass away as a shadow, but by laws which are immutable and indispensable. Ceremonies are arbitrary; and not only reason, but God himself in this case covers what deformity soever they may present to men, who cannot interpret what they do not understand. When the Pharisees, who were very curious in trivial concerns, censured the disciples of our Lord for rubbing the ears of corn as they were passing through the fields, to satisfy their hunger, Jesus replied, ‡that David broke one of the ceremonial precepts in eating the shew-bread which the priest did not deny him; he told them, if they

* Leviticus x. 19.

† Deuteronomy xii. 7.—xxvi. 14.

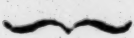
‡ Matthew vii. 2.

had known what these words meant, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*, they would not have condemned the innocent. He thus acquitted both David and his disciples from the words of the * prophet. Mercy, with God, is of greater importance than sacrifice ; he never imputed the omission of the ritual and ceremonial part of religion to any one as a crime, when the excuse was of just necessity, and when there was the rational consideration of a greater good to preponderate that omission.

BUT the laws given to the sons of men as a rule of life, are not ceremonial and temporary, but real and eternal, nor can those sins which break them receive any palliation. To plead excuse against them, is to turn mercy into sacrifice, piety into ceremony, to be the advocate of Baal, and to justify sin, which is the most presumptuous of all offences. When the sacrifices were omitted, and the sabbath for some reasons not observed, the Scriptures nowhere complain. And it is not only lawful, but necessary in some cases, to omit one

* Hosea vi. 6.

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and break the other. It is asserted to be a sin not to do that which otherwise would be a sin, not to neglect the sabbath to save the life of a man or of a beast. There is scarce any ceremony which has not, at some time, upon just occasion, been omitted. But when the moral law is broken; when people decline into idolatry, when they are murderers, adulterers, oppressors, all the extenuation which the ingenuity of man can devise will not palliate their sentence. To imagine that God will admit of excuse for the breach of an eternal law, which binds every man at all times, and in all places, as is the property of every moral precept, were to cause him, by a kind of fraud, to avoid and defeat his own decree. It were to render his goodness imaginary, and his severity fanciful, his commands only a security for delinquents. It were to turn his justice into iniquity, and his wisdom into folly. It derogates from his power, which is unlimited, and ridicules his wisdom, which is above comprehension. He who commits a sin, *endeavours to be stronger than God: but he who excuses it, strives, as it were, to shut his all-seeing eye. How-

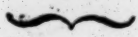
* *Potior Jupiter quam ipse Jupiter.* *Terence.*

ever atrocious it may be, no sin is punished when properly confessed, as the histories * of Saul and † David will confirm. God commanded Saul by the mouth of Samuel, to *smite Amaleck, and utterly to destroy all which they had, to spare them not.* But Saul spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and oxen. Here only the command was violated. For, when he spared the oxen and sheep, his pretence was good; he did it to *sacrifice them to the Lord.* But to the sins of David no eloquence is equal; he spared not the poor man's only little ewe-lamb, which he had bought and nourished in his bosom. Saul offended against one positive command, which was only for a short time, and which God often excused. But David against an eternal law, written in his heart, with which he never did and never will dispense. Saul committed but one single sin, but the sin of David carried a train with it, of which the least in appearance was greater than that of Saul;—of adultery, of drunkenness, of murder. To these may be added, his continuance in sin for a whole year, without any sense, recol-

* 1 Samuel xv. —

† 2 Samuel xii. —

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lection, or remorse. It would be useless, indeed, to represent the horror of these crimes, were it not to discover this most necessary truth, the danger of covering a sin, and the mercy of God in confession and penitence. Nathan no sooner pronounced him a sinner, but without excuse or equivocation, he instantly confessed it; and his pardon followed his repentance, as an echo the sound from whence it proceeds. But it was otherwise with Saul; he violated the commandment of God on pretence of sacrifice, thus abusing his wisdom with mockery and deceit. He, at length, however, made a liberal, though late confession: Samuel, faithful Samuel, earnestly interceded, but the offender's confession and the prophet's petition availed not. * *The prayer of the righteous shall save the sick*, says St. James. Most certainly then to cover a sin can receive no alleviation, which the prayer of so righteous a person as Samuel could not recover. It was also not only rejected, but he was charged to pray for him no more: † *how long wilt thou mourn for Saul*, says God, *since I have refused him?*

* James v. 15.

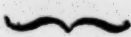
† 1 Samuel xvi. 1.

THIS sin then is of a very peculiar nature ; it makes a less crime exceed a greater ; it turns anger into murder, the breach of a temporal more dangerous than of an eternal law. There are several ways observed in the conduct of those whose hearts are corrupted by irregularity and disorder. They either conceal or deny, *as Sarah denied that she laughed. When Gehazi had pursued Naaman for a reward, †boldly told his master, thy servant went no whither. They sometimes despair, as in the instances of Cain and Judas ; or repent and confess, as in David and Job ; or excuse, as in Saul. Though they deny the fact, they acknowledge it to be evil ; for they would not deny it, if they did not confess it to be evil ; neither would they be ashamed to own it were it otherwise. In alleviation and extenuation some confession is made ; they acknowledge faintly but partially. In despair they make an open, but a vain acknowledgment, and though the despairing sinner ruins himself, he deserves compassion rather than justification. These are voluntary errors committed to avoid the punishment which is due to them.

* Genesis xviii. 5.

† 2 Kings v. 25.

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THAT contrition also which proceeds from the apprehension of danger, is of a base and fordid nature. It is grounded on a principle of self-interest, while that which arises from having offended God, is the act of a generous affection. One is the effect of our love of God, the other of the love of ourselves; grieving not so much for the heinousness of the crime, as for fear of the punishment. Like the tears of a malefactor, bewailing his melancholy condition, not because he has committed the crime, but because he is about to suffer for it.

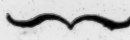
BUT for him who is ready with a veil to cover his sin, who can make an excuse suitable to the circumstance, there breathes not any penitential air; because he maintains that to be good which his conscience will tell him is evil. I may deceive the wicked, says the hypocrite, who are more wicked than myself: I may sin, because I am weak; and break the commandment, because I cannot keep it: I may multiply actual sins, because of original sin. Simeon and Levi murdered the Shechemites, and said they, ** should he deal with our sister*

* Genesis xxxiv. 31.

as with an harlot. Thus he excuses the violation of one commandment with his zeal for another; his breach of charity by his love to faith: his malice by his zeal; he acts illegally and pretends conscience; he pleads ignorance where there is sufficient light; weakness where he presumes; and willingness when he had no will or inclination to do good. If we thus strive to deceive the wisdom of God, if we think that any cover will keep us from his eye, who sees more of us than we do when we are most impartial to ourselves, mercy, which triumphs over justice, will yield to wisdom. So pleasing is excuse to our disposition, and so inseparable from it, that it is both the daughter and sister of sin. It is compared to a serpent, and the poison of it to a deadly asp. We are smitten, and we do not feel it; we are upon the very margin of misery and yet safe; we are in the very jaws of death and yet secure. Sin is called a burden, but it is as with those who are under the water, they feel no weight though seas run over them. But we, vain and ignorant, impute it to our weakness and infirmity, which, God knows, will not bear it; we rest it upon his long-suffering and
mercy;

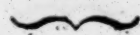
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mercy ; abusing by our presumptuous perseverance his most excellent attribute : we rest it upon our Saviour, while we crucify him again by our actual and daily transgressions.

SIN corrupts the judgment and biases the conscience, depriving it of its natural offices ; *to condemn, †to torment, ‡to excuse, and §to terrify. Though God has established this tribunal in our hearts, and made every man a judge in his own actions, yet there is no tribunal on earth more corrupted and swayed from its power and jurisdiction. No man is so partial a judge in the cause of another as in his own ; no man so well pleased with any cheat, as that which he puts upon himself. And though God has placed a conscience in us, as he put the urim and thummim in the breast-plate of judgment, by which we might be instructed in right and wrong, and know what we have done well and what ill ; as the High-priest by viewing his breast-plate saw whether the people were to go to war or not. Yet, when it is once defiled, we

* Romans ii. 15.

† 1 John iii. 20.

‡ Deuteronomy xxviii. 65.

§ Leviticus xxvi. 36.

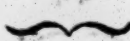
lose its use in our slavery to sin ; * as the Jews lost the use of their urim and thummim at the captivity of Babylon. It executes none of its offices ; it neither accuses nor convinces ; it neither condemns nor afflicts. It checks us, and we silence it ; sin appears, and we cover it. We will neither give ear to her council before we sin, nor hearken to her reproof after the commission of it. Neither observe her as a counsellor nor as a judge ; neither obey her as a friend, nor fear her as an enemy. Hence the office is perverted, and the very property neglected. It is a conscience, but knows nothing ; a register, but records nothing ; a glass, but reflects nothing ; a book of remembrance, but it contains not our injustice or deceit, our oppression or impiety.

EVERY man is not equally prone to every sin ; but according to different habits and constitutions, what is loathed by one is coveted by another. The prodigal scorns the covetous ; and the covetous condemns and pities the prodigal. The lukewarm christian hates the schismatic, and the schif-

* Ezra ii. 63.

Nehemiah vii. 65.

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matic calls every one lukewarm who is not so zealous or turbulent as himself. All men are not inclined to commit the same sin. Passion overcomes one; anger draws the sword of another; fear betrays another; ambition or pride lifts another above himself; covetousness buries many in the earth. He who is as wax to one vice, is as marble to another; and it may have been as difficult for the * miser in the gospel to have scattered his goods, † as for the prodigal to have kept them; as difficult for some to exercise their anger, as for others to curb and bridle it. Some can stand firm in poverty, but are overthrown by wealth. Envy slays one, and drunkenness drowns another. But excuse is a cover which will fit all sins.

God hath imprinted in every man a natural shame of sin, which causes him to flee from the observation of the world. Darkness is his pavilion, because it has so deformed an aspect, that even her most familiar friends are ashamed of her company. Sin is a favourite we embrace in secret, a

* Luke xii. 19.

† Luke xv. 13:

monster

monster we avoid in public. Good deeds are produced at noon-day, before the sun and the world; but no night is dark enough to cover our sins. When we bestow our alms to the poor we sound a trumpet; when we have withstood a temptation, we can scarcely allow God as our judge, but some art is used that multitudes may know it. But when we commit sin; when we are willing a temptation should prevail, when we even tempt the temptation itself, all is hushed and silence, we are well content that God alone should be our judge.

No confession can be useful, but as it is an instrument of shame to the person, of humiliation to the man, and dereliction of the sin. It receives its compensation but as it adds to these purposes. Any other confession is like the bleating of the calves, and the lowing of the oxen, which Saul reserved after the spoil of Agag. It proclaims the sin, but constitutes not the cure. It serves the intention of God to make us justly acknowledge our own condemnation, but advances nothing for our absolution. Even if we add the warmest expressions of humiliation; unless we proceed to a total

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subversion of sin, to the extirpation of every vicious habit, God is not glorified, nor are we secured in the benefits of his mercy. It must be brought to judgment, and, like Antinous in Homer, laid in the midst as the cause and sacrifice of mischief. Let it be confessed, and carried with the pomps and solemnities of sorrow to its funeral. But when the forms of confession are passed, if we spare Agag and the fattest of the cattle, our delicious and darling sins; and still leave an unlawful tyrant to reign within us, we may pretend to an interest in the mercy and favour of God, but we are no better penitents than Ahab; no nearer to the attainment of our hopes than Esau to his birth-right, for whose repentance there was no admission, although he entreated it with tears.

To make a particular and sorrowful acknowledgment of our offences, the degrees of them must be enumerated, and their enormities aggravated. How desirous were the best saints and worst sinners to confess that *they were conceived in sin, and born in iniquity!* How ready to denominate themselves the children of wrath, and workers of
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of unrighteousness; to miscall their virtues; to find infidelity in their faith, wavering in their hope, pride in their humility, ignorance in their knowledge, and coolness in their devotion; and some degrees of hostility even in their love of God! But this confession is only the product of speculation, a faint and momentary disgust; it is the issue of the lips, not the sacrifice of the heart. Our sins may be made innumerable, *more than the hairs of our head, or the sands on the sea shore; but when a particular account comes, some infirmities which are the companions of humanity, some of sudden suggestion and surprize, some minute and almost invisible sins, are to be met with; but not the figure of those which we think will involve us in misery and ruin. This is not that confession which precedes repentance, or that which will be crowned with mercy. It is rather an ingredient to mingle the cup of stupefaction, which we swallow with delight, and dream of peace and safety in the midst of a tempest. David only said, *I have sinned*, and his sin was removed. Such was the force

* Psalm xl. 12.

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of the expression, when the heart of David was offering its sacrifice, that it was carried up before the Lord in heaven.

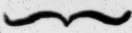
How much better it is to confess and forsake our sins, rather than when we have committed them, to cover and hide, to palliate and excuse them. For if confession can procure absolution, why should we be ashamed to use it? Let us learn to put off the old man, to unnaturalize ourselves, and forget the unseasonable and ungraceful method of disguising our sins. Less deformed are they in the sight of God when they appear in their own shape, and assume not the figure and name of virtue. If masks and disguise add no beauty, they conceal deformity; but deformity of sin appears more odious through a veil of piety. From the eyes of the Almighty no cloud can shadow us, no deep can cover us, no mountain can hide us: to him we are never more exposed than when most concealed; our vices are never more covered than when laid open by confession. He looks not at them when we read the catalogue ourselves, but his eye is always watchful when we endeavour to disguise them. He who confesses them
finds

finds a remedy ; but he who covers them, casts the remedy away ; by too much tenderness he suffers his sore to gangrene, till it ultimately prove incurable and fatal. Sin is a distemper of the soul, and as we observe of some diseases of the body, if it drive its poison outward by confession, it restores the soul to a healthful constitution ; but if it lurk inward, and secrete itself in the heart, it is ruinous and fatal.

THE primitive saints not only abhorred the excuses of sin, but they may seem to have too much bowed to the opposite course, and to have studied expressions to a contrary purpose. *St. Paul denominates himself the chief of sinners. But there appears to be more piety in his persecution of the church of Christ, though he professed it was done ignorantly, than can be ascribed to many who seem to maintain, to cherish, and defend it. A zeal for the law which God had made impelled him to support such a cause ; a jealousy lest the glory should depart from Israel, and that service be beat to the ground which had been so

* 1 Timothy i. 13.

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long established. Yet St. Paul has recorded, and posterity must believe, that for this action he calls himself the chief of sinners. Thus he accuses himself for small, as well as for great sins; he concealed them by revealing them; he diminished them by addition; he represented them as nothing by aggravating their contagion. Confession lifts up when it casts down; then is most glorious when it most dishonours; beautiful when it defiles; when it accuses it excuses; and then only it absolves, when it condemns; changing the shadow of a dark and gloomy evening into a bright and glorious morning.

LET us not sin then through shame, for nothing can shame or disgrace us but sin. If, however we submit to the frenzy of passion, or the force of temptation, let us be as bold to confess as we were to offend. Thus will he be restored to the favour of God, who was before a victim to his displeasure; and be accounted righteous, who was before guilty. He who was thus excluded, will be led into the land of peace by a merciful mediator. It is as a sanctuary to every penitent; as Mount Ararat to the

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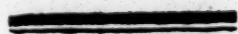
the ark of Noah; as the hand of Noah to his weary dove; as the golden sceptre of Ahasuerus to the humble penitent. St. Paul, the persecutor of the church; St. Peter, who forswore his master; Mary Magdalene, with seven devils; the thief upon the cross; Manasses, an idolater; the Corinthians, for incest; David, a murderer and adulterer; Ahab, and the Ninevites, were pardoned upon their confession. And these examples are recorded, not only to magnify the forbearance and compassion of God, but to confirm us in the belief of this necessary truth, that every man who *confesses* and *forsakes* his sins, will *find mercy*.

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SERMON VI.

ON FAITH.



HEBREWS XI. 6, part.

Without Faith it is impossible to please him.

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TO fortify the converted Jews against the pernicious principles of the Gnostics, who maintained that in the time of danger or persecution, they might not only not profess christianity, but deny it to the world, and to secure their present tranquillity might conceal and renounce their opinions, the author of this epistle recommends the doctrine of faith and perseverance. From many eminent examples in this chapter,

chapter, he persuades them to a confident reliance on God ; who will as assuredly reward them, as he did the primitive saints for their obedience and affection.

Faith, says he, *is the *substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* Whatever is attested by sense, is not credible but evident ; not matter of faith, but knowledge. Our assurance of the heat of fire, or of the whiteness of snow, is grounded on the evidence of sense, not on principles of faith, which relate to things at a distance, and are acquired by no immediate manifestation of the things themselves. Human faith is the assent to any thing credible, merely upon the testimony of man, which we exercise in the concerns of this world. Hence we believe the words and affections of each other. This is so necessary even in common conversation, that without it life itself would be more toilsome and uncom-

* Ὑποστασις, which is here translated *substance*, is usually rendered by *confidence* (2 Corinth. ix. 4.) as, Μὴ καλαιοσχυνθῶμεν ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ τῆς καυχίσεως ; and εἰάν περ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν κατέσχωμεν. HEBREWS iii. 14.

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fortable. Upon the testimony of others, the mariner exposes his life to the violence of the ocean, and abandons the tranquility of domestic society; and the merchant ventures his wealth to the remotest corner of the globe. To endeavour therefore to invalidate the credit of human confidence is a conspiracy against the general good.

BUT the faith intended in the text, is that which is founded on the testimony of God. This is the noblest and most secure faith, inasmuch as his ability cannot be disputed, or his fidelity impeached. For his ability is infinite in comprehension, as there is nothing beyond the circumference of his wisdom; and in certainty, as there is nothing but what to him is open and visible. Much is beyond the utmost extent of the intellectual powers of man to discern, and beyond the compass of his most improved knowledge to understand. If we narrowly inspect those subjects which we seem best to comprehend, and for which we value ourselves, because we think we can interpret them, how will our reason convict us of presumption, and detect our ignorance. We only obscurely and contractedly under-stand

stand the most obvious things ; we discern them *through a glass, darkly* ; * *hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us.* But what is not within the reach of his understanding, who it is impossible to deceive ? or how can we doubt his ability to inform us right, or suspect his intention to delude us ? To question either his integrity or his wisdom, therefore, would be blasphemous and irrational. It does not derogate from his infinite power that he cannot deceive ; for then the attribute of his external veracity would be destroyed for the maintenance of his omnipotence†.

BUT this testimony is either given by God himself, or by men divinely inspired. Revelation is the only way in which it is delivered. Supported by the same authority, and conveyed by the same influence, we must use no restrictions in the belief of it,

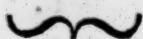
* Wisdom ix. 16.

† Si velint invenire quod Omnipotens non potest, habent prorsus, ego dicam, mentiri non potest.—*Augustine de Civit. Dei, Lib. xxii. c. 25.*—Ut sit omnium potens, mori non potest, falli non potest, mentiri non potest.—*Ibid. de Symb. ad Catechum.*

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or in the piety and submission due to it. Notwithstanding Moses and the ancient prophets believed the truth which God personally revealed, because they were assured of the certainty of his divinity ; yet, those who assented to what the prophets declared, believed from a persuasion only that it proceeded from him. Thus the faith of both, though exhibited in a different manner, was built on the same foundation. It was not indeed the imaginary notion of the moment, nor the wild effusion of fancy, but the rational belief in the word of God*, dictated by the Holy Ghost. When Zacharias was praising and blessing God for visiting his people ; and when † Solomon, in his dedication of the temple, prayed that he would be propitious to the supplications which were there offered by the Jews, both insinuated the same. The prophets were only the instruments to convey to the world the word of the Deity, as the apostles published afterwards the doctrine of Christ. The same implicit reverence is due to them as was yielded to the instructions of the prophets. That what they preached was

* 2 Peter i. 21.

† 1 Kings viii. 55.

the word of God is acknowledged by St. Luke* ; which the Thessalonians also believed†. It was not, however, merely upon the testimony of the apostles, but as it was attested by God himself, who had so eminently supported their faith and obedience, by enduing them with the miraculous power‡ of restoring the blind, the lame, and the diseased, to their former purity and soundness. Thus on his testimony they ultimately relied, though they believed immediately upon the testimony of the apostles.

BUT this extraordinary favour granted to the apostles, who were the instruments to convey his mind to the world, could neither secure them, nor the ancient prophets from death ; they were unable personally to inform future generations. For the instruction therefore of succeeding ages they committed their directions to writing, which were composed by the assistance of the same infallible spirit that moved and guided their speech, and require equal readiness of assent, and equal sincerity of be-

* Acts xiii. 44. † 1 Thessalonians ii. 13. ‡ Acts xiv. 3.

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lief. The end and design of writing such truths which they had received from above, was to obtain universal concurrence; ** they were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through his name.* Thus the faith of those christians, who never had the happiness so much desired by a holy father of the church†, to hear Christ or his apostles preaching, is founded immediately on the writings of the prophets and apostles. The material truth of those writings was abundantly confirmed by God himself, in granting them such an extraordinary power of working miracles, and such a diversity of tongues, as enabled them to instruct other nations in their own vernacular language, the rudiments of which they had not even learned.

THERE are various definitions of this divine faith; but they are made chiefly with respect either to that trust and reliance on God which faith produces, or to that submission and obedience which the belief of his word creates; and are rather descriptions of its effects than of its nature.

* John xx. 31.

† St. Augustine.

MIRACLES are the most plain and undeniable credentials of divinity. Preternatural effects cannot be wrought by natural causes, nor performed, unless by the assistance of the God of nature. The authors of these writings enjoyed such authentic confirmation of a supernatural assistance, that to dispute what they delivered personally or published historically (for they are both supported by the same authority) is to scruple the testimonies of heaven, as of insufficient credibility for the foundation of our belief.

WHAT can be said to those, who, though they call themselves christians, not only doubt, but deny some of the principal doctrines of the gospel. How can these things be? say the heretics of all ages, though expressed in diction the most simple and perspicuous. They will not allow any merit to God, when he does not condescend to their reason. They hence pervert the meaning of the most obvious phrases, and the most important articles of faith. But were the scriptures written only to exert the wit or puzzle the understanding of mankind? or is there nothing in the divine nature above human comprehension?

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CAN we wonder therefore that faith is of so much importance both to our religion and to ourselves. Our Saviour establishes it as the ground of his gracious dispensations. *Only believe*, says he to one, *and thy daughter shall be made whole*; to another, *If thou canst believe, all things are possible*. In every application to him for relief, he confers it upon this general issue, *Be it unto thee according to thy faith*. By faith we are said to be justified. To faith is attributed all the heroic exploits recorded in this chapter; and St. Paul seems to suspend the whole work of our salvation (on our parts) upon it, in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians.

BECAUSE few men are so wantonly profane as professedly to reject the testimony of God, yet may consider the writings of the apostles not to be of sufficient credibility to engage their belief; it may be argued, that if they had no divine attestation (which he alone can doubt who will believe nothing but from ocular demonstration) we have sufficient reason to satisfy the perverse obstinacy of the prejudiced, as well as to weaken the hardihood of the infidel; and
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to believe them upon the mere principles of human faith, upon the ability and integrity of the authors. They had every possible opportunity of information; they wrote only what they heard and saw; not upon vague report or popular tradition; nor was it allusive to circumstances transacted in different ages, or in different nations, which is the case of common historians; but what was performed in their own age, in their own nation, and in their own company. There is yet less reason to scruple their integrity; for how could they design to impose upon the world, when their narrative, unsupported by the pomp of words, or the influence of power, would so materially tend to their disadvantage! They saw their Lord and Master crucified by the Jews, and how could they expect to be received with kindness in professing to be his disciples; and in charging them publicly with injustice and cruelty, in wrongfully murdering the Lord of Life, and barbarously spilling the blood of innocence! Had they studied to recommend themselves and their doctrines to the world by false relations, they would not have blazed abroad with such confidence and

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ingenuity their own reprehensible defects, their ambitious pretensions for precedence, their shameful desertion and denial of their master, with other dishonourable practices. These circumstances would have been forgotten, and involved in perpetual silence, had they not themselves recorded and transmitted them to posterity. What could be the design, may it be asked, of abusing the word of God? Did they expect the enjoyment of wealth? They suffered, it is well known, the loss of all their temporal possessions to defend their doctrine. Did they aim at the acquisition of honour, of public reputation, or of private importance? It exposed them to universal ignominy and contempt. Were they induced by the hopes of pleasure? The endeavours to propagate their doctrine rendered their lives miserable; they were banished, beaten, imprisoned, and slain. Neither in the expectation of riches, nor in the acquisition of honour, nor in the pursuit of pleasure, can we account for the firmness of their opinions, or for the publication of their writings. They naturally concluded it would provoke the hatred, and sharpen the malice of the Jews; they certainly supposed

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ed that the genius of the new religion, which so ill suited the sensual prejudices of the world, would meet with opposition and disdain. To believe the apostolical writings, therefore, to be the artifice of impostors, is to pronounce the authors not only the basest, but the most foolish of men. This charge is sufficiently confuted by the writings themselves.

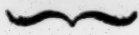
ON this foundation the authority of the holy scriptures is built, and on this evidence it is supported. And that they are a complete and authentic declaration of the mind of God, we have the testimonies of St. Peter* and † St. Paul. How industriously is the common use of this sacred volume discountenanced by those whose erroneousness of doctrine, and whose articles of faith will not stand the test of the touchstone of truth. And though the pretence is a holy concern for the safety of their people, lest the ignorant and irresolute should interpret it to their own destruction, and though to secure the credit of their opinions, they undermine its authority, and depreciate its value ; yet

* 2 Peter ii. 19.

† 2 Timothy iii. 16.

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they know not what irreparable an injury they offer to religion by invalidating its laws, and ridiculing its charter. It is an unworthy reflection on infinite wisdom, that it is revealed to the world in a manner which deserves our indignation, instead of our regard. Thus may the commandments of men be easily imposed, where there is no evidence either of truth or falsehood. Those truly may decry the authority of Scripture, who have reason to fear its censure; and prohibit the use of that rule, which would so readily discover the obliquity of their doctrines.

* MOSES enjoined the Israelites to read the Scriptures; and the Jews considered themselves bound to a constant and diligent perusal of their law. † Our Saviour and his apostles, in their popular discourses, referred their auditors to the law for the confirmation of what they affirmed. So critical were the Jews in this duty, that many of them could tell even the number of letters which composed the five books of Moses; and could more readily answer

* Deuteronomy vi. 6.

† Luke vi. 3. John x. 34. Acts ii. 16.

questions concerning the law than the most familiar circumstances of common life.*

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IF we are bound to know and to practise our duty, we are reasonably obliged to read those books which contain and express it; to examine those laws, which, under the peril of condemnation we are enjoined to obey. Shall we lose the rewards of immortality, and not concern ourselves to look where they are revealed? Is life and death set before us, and do we fancy ourselves at full liberty not to inquire how to obtain one and avoid the other? Shall the disciples of Christ, united in one holy communion and fellowship with him, imagine they are not compelled to examine the rule of their profession, when the promises to conformity are so great, and the threats against disobedience are so grievous? The Scriptures were written for the use of all men: and, as what they teach is the duty of all, and what they promise is the portion of all, every one should read them. † It was the injunction of Moses to the people, and it was the practice of Joshua.‡ The

*Josephus, lib. ii. contra Appion. †Deut. xxxi. ‡Joshua viii. 34.

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Jews were commanded to write the last song of Moses, to retain it in memory, and to sing it often ; that it might serve as a testimony against themselves if they should forsake the worship of God. * The Bereans were pronounced more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they not only received the word with cheerfulness, but daily searched the Scriptures. † It is a high recommendation of the character of Apollo, that he was well informed in them, and ‡ of Timothy, who knew them from a child.

HE who therefore declines instruction is answerable for every violation of his duty ; and his negligence will be no apology for his ignorance. The Scripture teaches us the articles of our christian faith ; what is to be believed to attain future felicity. The nature of God is more perfectly discovered than by the light of natural reason. There we are taught to believe a Trinity in Unity, which is a degree of knowledge Philosophy could never have devised ; and of which we should have been ever ignorant without

* Acts xvii. 11.

† Acts xviii. 24.

‡ 2 Timothy iii. 15.

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this revelation. There we are enabled to confute erroneous doctrines. And though there is scarce any opinion, how absurd or impious soever, but pretends to the patronage of Scripture, that it may seem unprofitable for this purpose; yet he who enquires with an honest desire to know and to obey the truth, will have no difficulty to find it.

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THE Scripture is also serviceable for the reprehension of our vices, and amendment of our lives. It contains prohibitions as well as precepts; it directs us what to avoid and what to perform. There the voluptuary finds sensuality forbidden; the miser covetousness condemned; the passionate man meets with restraints to his anger; and the drunkard a rebuke for his intemperance; the profane person is taught that vain swearing is a sin; and the common liar that he is excluded from the kingdom of happiness. It learns us * to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world; how to discharge our obligations to God, our neighbour, and ourselves †;

* Titus i. 12,

† Deuteronomy vi. 5.

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to love and to * worship God alone, to fear and to trust him, to honour and obey him. It teaches us justice and charity to our neighbour; not to injure him either in his body, his property, or his character. Princes may learn equity and clemency; the subject, fidelity and obedience: Parents to love and provide for their children; and children to respect and obey their parents: the husband to be kind and indulgent to his wife; and the wife may there be taught to reverence her husband. It exhorts the master to be good and gentle, to give to his servants what is just and equal; and servants to be obedient to them that are their masters. It teaches us sobriety, temperance, and chastity; to be decent in our apparel, moderate in our diet, and regular in our desires. It affords us remedies in all the difficult circumstances of our condition. Are we in dread of divine vengeance for the licentiousness of our manners, there we may find alleviation; promises of pardon to the penitent sinner, and instances of God's goodness in the forgiveness of the sins of others. Are we under the burthen of tem-

* Matthew iv. 10.

poral calamities, the scripture affords consolation; it administers medicine to the broken in heart, strength to the weak in faith, and relief to the miserable and unfortunate. It applies a remedy to all our necessities, it elevates our drooping minds, and cheers our desponding spirits.

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LET us then apply ourselves to the study of this book, with singleness and simplicity of heart. It is in this soil alone the seed will prosper. He * who covets to know his master's will, without an honest intention to practise it, only entiles himself to the greater number of stripes. Yet † the speculative reader does not always increase his knowledge; for though the Scripture, ‡ like the pillar of fire and cloud, enlighten the Israelites, it darkens and confounds the Egyptians. He is led on by curiosity into the more abstruse and mysterious parts of it, where he is entragled in inextricable mazes; and instead of acquiring a more eminent knowledge, he loses those easy points which are obvious to every well-meaning reader. But he who desires to

* Luke xii. 47.

† Job v. 13.

‡ Exodus xiv. 20.

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know his duty, only that he may more perfectly practise it, improves both his knowledge and his manners, he will have * *a lantern to his feet, and a light to his paths.*

To lay aside all capricious prejudices and hasty resolutions, is highly necessary in order to acquiesce in what is there offered to our belief. The want of this preparation of mind has occasioned various controversies concerning matters of faith. We are prepossessed with certain notions, and endeavour to bend the Scripture our own way, thus rendering our own prejudicate opinions the key to Scripture, and not Scripture the rule of our belief. It is also a lamentable consideration that many who profess to search the Scripture for life and salvation, should be less industrious and attentive than those whose only design is cavil and objection. They exercise the utmost subtlety of criticism, who only aim to remark seeming contradictions and incoherencies; whilst he who professes to esteem it, is lax and indifferent in the study of it, and not very solicitous to instruct himself in its injunc-

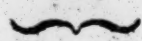
* Psalm cxix. 105.

tions. God is not in this instance found by those who do not seek him. The virtue of the Scriptures consists in their sense and meaning, and not in words and characters. To convince the understanding, and to persuade the affections it is requisite to observe which of the injunctions are temporary and which eternal. Some were adapted to the particular state of the Jews, and consequently imposed no restraint on other people. Some are of eternal obligation, from which neither ages nor persons are exempted. These laws are either ceremonial, judicial, or moral. The ceremonial are those which relate to the discipline of the Jewish church, which concern their sacrifices and legal purities, and enjoin those ceremonies which neither **our fathers nor we were able to bear*. The judicial are those which respect the Jews considered as a community of men, prescribed for the government of their state. The moral, are such as respect actions essentially good and evil. Thus we read the ceremonial and judicial laws as a history of the Jewish polity in church and state, not as the rule of our conduct. Those

* Acts xv. 10.

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only which are moral affect us, as they respect neither age nor state, but are the duty of every man to the end of the world ; enjoining what is immutably good, and prohibiting what is immutably evil. It was the design of our Saviour to rescue these precepts from the corrupt glosses and partial interpretations of the wicked, and to reduce them to their native obligation ; by imposing a restraint upon our wills as well as actions, and by informing us that sin consisted not only in the literal transgression of the law, but in the irregular desires of the heart.

By applying to our own particular use the terrors and the promises of Scripture, we shall render all our reading useful and operative. The crimes which *St. Paul told his Corinthians would exclude them from heaven, will be as fatal to us. In every precept, therefore, of good life and christian virtue, we must consider ourselves as nearly and particularly concerned, as though we had been Christ's auditors on the Mount ; and in all the threats and pro-

* 1 Corinth. vi. 10.

mises, we are either to tremble or hope, as we find ourselves adhere to those virtues or sins to which they are affixed.

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He who reads the bible without prayer, can never expect to be blessed with sufficient knowledge of it. It is the sole work of the divine spirit to inform and illuminate our minds; and the peculiar guidance of this infallible instructor is required to *direct us into the path of truth. It is no improper importunity to implore him to open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of the divine law; and to conduct our reason aright in our inquiry into this sacred book. By such continual study of the Holy Scriptures, we shall know how to correct the partiality of our opinions and the errors of our lives; we shall enrich our minds with a stock of excellent principles; and be properly incited to the exercise of good works: and we shall be thus conducted to the highest improvements of knowledge and sanctity in this life, and to the most consummate felicity in another.

* John xvi. 13.—† John ii. 20.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

On the NATIVITY of CHRIST.

I TIMOTHY I. 15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

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TO reflect on the advent of Christ, on his love to mankind, and his mercy to sinners, are subjects which kindle our affection with delight, and animate our devotion with zeal. When we consider the servility of his condition, and the dignity of his sufferings, equally exposed as he was to the hardship of penury, and to the dangers of opposition, who can, when such
con-

contemplations arrest the mind, withhold an unqualified confession of his power too mighty to be resisted, and of his love too transcendent to be doubted. It might have been a degradation sufficiently manifest, that the rays of his divinity should be obscured by the veil of mortality ; that the dignity of his person and the importance of his mission should submit to the shackles of convenience, and be restrained by the boundaries of earthly vicissitude. It might be thought that the most splendid endowments of the world would have operated only as an empty and insignificant magnificence to him who was Lord of all ; and that he had no occasion to be subject to the infirmities of human nature to prove his humility and his love. No less wonderful in its cause, or amazing in its circumstances, was his message. It was a work worthy of himself ; to save the world, to restore fallen man, and to reconcile sinners to their offended God. Who could so effectually prevail with him for pardon and grace ? Who could make atonement so satisfactory for the sins of the world ? When mankind had justly incurred the severity of divine wrath, and forfeited their title to salvation ;

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vation ; so unmerited and so pure was the mercy of Jesus, that he even then undertook the deliverance of his bitterest enemies, of rebels and traitors to the majesty of heaven ; he again entitled them to a celestial inheritance, and rendered them capable of glory and immortality.

** Lord, what is man that thou hast such respect unto him, or the son of man that thou so regardest him ?* What could be more contemptible than the inhabitants of the earth, vile dust and ashes, the creatures of sin, in defiance with heaven, when Jesus Christ undertook a cause so transcendent, assumed human nature, and partook of human infirmities, and for what, but to instruct us familiarly in the path of reconciliation, to give us an example of piety and virtue, for the establishment of our faith, the enlargement of our charity, and the pardon of our sins ? The incarnation, therefore, deserves to be commemorated, not with the idle parade of external ceremony, or with the vain pomp of external praise, but with the undisguised assurance of hope, and with the

* Psalm cxliv. 3.

lively ardour of affection ; for it is *a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*

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OUR first parents had no sooner violated their covenant with God, and subjected themselves and their posterity to misery and ruin, but he gave them a merciful promise, threatened to revenge them on the treacherous serpent, and that the * seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head ; that one of her progeny should retrench the power of Satan, and overturn the kingdom of darkness. This was confirmed to Abraham, and limited to his generation, who were assured, that † in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. ‡ Moses told the Israelites, that the Lord their God should raise up a prophet, like himself, from among their brethren, and that him they should hear : § and David received a faithful oath from God, that *of the fruit of his body he would set upon his seat.*

ABOUT the time of our Saviour's advent, there was a general expectation throughout

* Genesis iii. 15.

† Genesis xxii. 18.

‡ Deuteronomy xviii. 15.

§ Psalm cxxxii. 11.

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the whole world of the birth of a mighty prince, who should come out of Judea, and subject all nations to himself. The Jews were elevated with the thoughts of a deliverer, which could not otherwise have been raised than by these promises. This may be perceived from the jealousy of Herod, and the testimony of Josephus, who declared the Jews rebelled against the Romans, because they were encouraged by a celebrated prophecy in their Scriptures, that a prince was to be born among them who should rule the world. It is evident also the Gentiles entertained an opinion, which was generally held in the East, that the Fates had determined there should come out of Judea one who was to govern the world, that *out of Judea should come a Ruler.** This may probably refer to the title given † by Zachariah to the Messiah, where he is called the man whose name is *the East*. The Jews now looked with impatience for the star, which, ‡ according to the prophecy of Balaam, was to come out of Jacob; and imagined, with some reason, that their Shiloh was about to appear. But they mistook

* Micah v. 2. † Zachariah xiii. 8. ‡ Genesis xlix. 10.

the character of their Redeemer; and while they expected one who should restore the temporal kingdom to Israel, they neglected the person of the true Saviour.

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GOD at length accomplished what had been so long promised, and so often confirmed: for **when the fulness of time was come he sent forth his Son, made of a woman; and the †word was flesh and dwelt among us.* The Manichæan opinion has here a sufficient confutation; which, though it did deny the appearance of Christ, yet maintained that it partook not of flesh and blood, but assumed (as the angels of old) a human shape. Is he not frequently stiled by himself, in a common Hebrew phrase, the Son of Man (though it sometimes denotes the eminence, and sometimes the meanness of him to whom it is applied)—and is he not ‡said to be made of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh? After his resurrection, § when his disciples doubted of the reality of his body, he appealed to their senses. If, therefore, he was in substance when he rose from the dead, he was not

* Galatians iv. 4.

‡ Romans i. 3.

† John i. 14.

§ Luke xxiv. 39.

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otherwise when he lived among them. Though he took not on him the nature of angels, yet he took on him the seed of Abraham.

THE salvation of mankind* is the noblest and most divine of the works of God. If we consider the state of human nature, after the fall of Adam; how obnoxious to divine vengeance, and how unable to perform any service acceptable to the Deity, it will appear to have been the most wretched part of the creation. † They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick: thus ‡ he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; he was sent only § to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

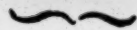
THAT sacrifice was the most solemn and primitive rite of atonement, is evident from the records of antiquity, from the testimonies both of Jews and Gentiles. The guilt of the person was to be transferred upon the victim, and the death of one to satisfy for

* Nihil tam dignum Deo, quam salus hominis. *Tertullian.*

† Mark xii. 17.

‡ Matthew xv. 24.

§ 2 Corinth. viii. 9.—Isaiah liii. 5.—Rom. v. 10.—2 Cor. v. 19.



that of the other. It was substituted to suffer that punishment which the offender had incurred before his remission. * The Jews were commanded when they brought their trespass-offering, to confess their sins, by which they transferred their guilt upon their offering. It acknowledged that they had justly forfeited their own lives, and deserved the punishment which the sacrifice was to undergo. This is more particularly remarkable in the dismissal of the scape-goat†, when the high-priest is directed to lay both his hands on the goat's head, and to confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and the goat is to bear upon him all their iniquities. Thus were the Gentiles accustomed to curse the sacrifice, to imprecate all those evils on it which they had deserved; and the lives of the beasts were considered as a sufficient commutation for the lives of those that offered them. In the New Testament Christ is represented under this character. He is said ‡ *to have put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*; § *to have died for our sins*; || *to have given himself for our sins*; *to have once suffered*

* Leviticus v. 5. † Leviticus xvi. 21. ‡ Hebrews ix. 26.

§ 1 Corinth. xv. 3. || Galatians i. 4.

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for our sins; the just for the unjust. It is said that in *him we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins; that †his blood was shed for many for the remission of sins; and, that ‡he is a propitiation for our sins. It is thus evident that our sins were the cause, and their expiation was the end of Christ's passion. Consequently, he is said §to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that is, to undergo the punishment of them in those exquisite torments he endured upon the cross. He is represented ||to be made sin for us, as the expiatory sacrifices were made sin, to undergo the punishment of it for the offenders that offered them. ¶He is our High-priest to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; **and by his own blood has obtained eternal redemption for every man.

THROUGH a long succession of ages, mankind had openly abused the goodness, and defied the authority of God. It therefore became necessary that there should be

* 1 Peter iii. 8.

† Matthew xxvi. 28.

‡ Romans iii. 25.—1 John iv. 10. § Colossians i. 14.

|| 1 Peter ii. 24.

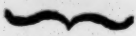
¶ 1 Corinth. v. 21.

** Leviticus iv. —. —Hebrews ii. 17.—ix. 12.

some

some public compensation made, and some exemplary punishment endured. It was proper that the right of God should be conspicuously asserted, that his love of good, and his hatred of evil should be remarkably demonstrated; and every man with solemn warnings of his duty should be admonished of that reverence and obedience he owes to the Great Creator, and of the heavy guilt he incurs by offending him. Jesus Christ made this public compensation; he suffered what we had deserved, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him. Although it be true that he did no sin, yet as our debt was imposed upon him he was subject to the punishment. If the judgments of God's laws could not be vindicated without the sufferings of Christ, how could we hope for impunity in the transgression of them? Had he neglected to take proper vengeance, we might with reason have concluded, to the reproach of his Holiness, that he was even *such as ourselves. But he has fully asserted the purity of his nature; and, instead of giving a sanction to sin, he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with de-

* Psalm l. 20.

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light. The sufferings of Christ are satisfactory proofs of this truth. God himself * declared he was well pleased both in his person and performances. For, although he was inclined to forgive the sons of men that debt which they were never able themselves to discharge, yet he was unwilling that his clemency should impair the glory of his other attributes. He therefore contrived some means to satisfy his justice, and display his holiness, even while he pardoned the offenders themselves; by accepting his Son instead of us, and imposing on him the stripes, as well as the iniquity of all.

By this sacrifice, Christ has not only reconciled us to God, but has instructed us in the duty of his new religion, which is revealed in his gospel. † He has openly discovered the counsel of God. The mysterious rites and legal ceremonies, which composed the principal part of the Jewish religion are useless and unavailable. Every duty required of us is so plain and rational, that if we understand the instances of our obedience we must regard and admire them.

* Matthew iii. 27.

† John xv. 15.

He obtained this knowledge, not from the assistance or information of others, but from an immediate personal intuition of the thoughts and purposes of his father, which were presented to his view from all eternity. He was endued with superior knowledge to that of other prophets, who were obliged to wait for the influx of the spirit, on whom it descended only at certain times, and upon certain occasions, and to whom God gave but partial discoveries of his will, according to present exigencies. But this power was not limited, *the spirit was not poured upon him by measure.

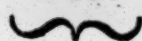
HE has taught us what to observe as a rule of obedience, in recommending by his own example, the duties which he prescribes. Thus he assumed human nature, that he might become an example of human virtue, which consists in acting as is suitable to the nature of man, who is a compound of spirit and matter, reason and sense. From these contrary principles arise contrary inclinations and affections; and in the pursuit of good or evil is human virtue and vice

* John iii. 34.

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concentrated. How could he then have practised those excellencies which consist in the dominion of spiritual and rational over brutal and sensitive faculties, as temperance, chastity, and meekness, had he not assumed that nature which is compounded of both? How could he have directed us by his own example to govern the passions, and to guide ourselves in the circumstances of men, had he not communicated with us in the passions and circumstances of human nature? He might have descended from heaven, enrobed in splendor and light, or have preached his gospel to the world in some conspicuous eminence in the clouds; which would have been more suitable to the natural dignity of his person. But here is displayed the wonderful philanthropy of the Son of God! He consulted not his own convenience so much as the welfare of men. He well knew that his appearance in such an illustrious figure would have astonished rather than instructed; would have amused our thoughts into a profound admiration of his glories, rather than have guided us in the paths of piety and virtue. He knew it would be our chief interest that he should conduct us by his example, than amaze us
by



by his appearance. He chose therefore, rather to assume our own nature, and live as a man, that he might instruct us by his example in what became men to do, and trace to us the way to happiness with the print of his own footsteps.

EXAMPLE is an active and predominant principle, and every man pursues with more vigour whatever another has successfully effected. It is an easy remark, that children transcribe the manners of their parents ; as may be observed of the colony transplanted in Samaria, * *as did their fathers, so did they.* Thus Christ mingled with the world, that he might exhibit a pattern of christian virtue, of our duty both to God and man ; of obedience to laws, submission to authority ; of love instead of resentment, and of charity instead of reproof. † *Learn of me*, says he ; and when he washed the feet of his disciples, he ‡ gave them an example to do the same. He conformed to those institutions he expects us to obey ; he employed not the casual leisure of the moment, nor the sudden suggestion of his mind, in exercises

* 2 Kings xvii. 41.

† Matthew xi. 29.

‡ John xiii. 15.

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of example ; but the perpetual purpose of his heart, and the unwearied pursuit of his life, were emblems of innocence and incitements to piety. His own conduct has assured us that the duties which he has enjoined are practicable and easy, and the precepts by which he enforced them are just and reasonable. Certainly there can be no greater confirmation of the equity of a law, than the conformity of practice.

THAT his example had a peculiar influence upon the primitive christians, is evident from the circumstances attending the death of St. Stephen. Our Saviour both by his doctrine, and his example, recommended the love of our enemies, *to bless them that curse, and to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us. He expressed the same under all the agonies of shame and sufferings ; †even upon the cross praying for his crucifiers. St. Stephen walked in the footsteps of his great master ; for being unhappily exposed to the hands of violence, he submitted to the phrenzy of persecution, and died the first martyr to the christian

* Matthew v. 44.

† Luke xxiii. 34.

faith.

faith. * With his last breath he also prayed for his murderers. How irreconcilable to the feelings, and how inaccessible to the understanding, the practice of this doctrine may appear to flesh and blood; yet, from the excellence of its nature it is highly recommended to us, as of the first magnitude in the christian institution, as it promotes the comfort and happiness of life, restrains every tumultuous and unreasonable passion, and prevents many perplexities which naturally flow from a malicious disposition; as it is the perfection of goodness itself, and the condition of our own forgiveness from God.

THAT nothing might be wanting to complete the salvation of man, he has procured competent assistance for the performance of what God requires from every one in the discharge of his christian duties. Without this, all his other works had been fruitless and ineffectual. For what would avail his present peace with God, and the knowledge of his duty, if he were still necessitated to sin, or unable to do, what he has made the condition of his favour and of

* Acts vii. 60.

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man's happiness? In vain is the debt paid, and the prison door opened, if the prisoner is not able to unloose the fetters which detain him, or has no benevolent hand to assist him. * Of ourselves we are unable to deal with those powerful temptations and disheartening dangers we must encounter in our spiritual warfare; we are not sufficient of ourselves to think or do any thing of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. By the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, who is never regardless of the endeavours of the faithful, we may surmount all the difficulties in virtue and religion; for † Jesus has assured us, that our *Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*. Thus it is ascribed as part of the character of a visible christian‡, that he has tasted of the heavenly gift, and is made partaker of the Holy Ghost. § *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in you?* Do ye not understand this to be a common privilege of christians, as ye profess yourselves to have communion with God by the inhabitation of the spirit? It has been the invariable doctrine of the ca-

* 2 Corinthians iii. 5.

† Hebrews vi. 4.

‡ Luke xi. 13.

§ 1 Corinthians iii. 16.

tholic church, that to all persons duly initiated by baptism into christianity, and admitted to the communion of the body and blood of Christ, the grace of the Holy Spirit is communicated, enabling them to perform the conditions of piety and virtue which they undertake, and continually watching over them for the accomplishment of those purposes. In the mystical body of Christ, those federal rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper, are not only as ligaments that unite and bind its members to each other, but they are also conveyances of that spiritual life by the Holy Ghost, which moves and actuates them.

NOT that his operations govern by irresistible force, and unerring authority, to controul in any degree our natural liberty. Not that he commonly works upon us in so strange and miraculous a manner, as in the first ministration of the gospel, when he frequently transformed in an instant, the natural passions and inclinations of men. But since the power of christianity is so extended, since it has proselyted so large a portion of the world, and become the religion of nations, the divine spirit more suitably operates

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operates upon the dispositions of human nature, in co-operating with the understanding, in leading us by reason and persuasion, from one religious duty to another; and demanding the unrestrained concurrence of the will. * He is indeed said to work in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure; yet we are at the same time † enjoined to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling; to make our calling and election sure.* Thus, whatever may be the assistance which the Holy Ghost now affords us, it is in the same way, and by the same direction, as though it were performed by the strength and application of reason.

UNDER the influence of so powerful an assistant, if we do not discharge our duty aright, if we regard not the dictates of the gospel, as the perpetual standard of our life and manners, we can accuse only our own perverseness. We are thus liberated‡ from the tyranny and dominion of sin; and enabled to resist the temptations, and to despise the delusions of the world. Christ has reconciled us to the favour of God, by the satisf-

* Philip. ii. 13. † 2 Peter ii. 1. ‡ Romans vi. 12.

faction of his justice, and reparation of his honour, in the sacrifice of himself; he has instructed us in the divine will of his Father; he has encouraged our obedience by his own example, and enforced it by the most powerful and comfortable sanctions; he has procured competent assistance to promote our religious endeavours, that we may secure the salvation of our immortal souls. Well might the *angel call the message of his birth, tidings of great joy, when a Saviour of mankind was born. And, if any intelligence was welcome to that deluded world, which was obscured in darkness and in the shadow of death, none could be more so, than that the Son of God was come, to give knowledge to the ignorant, comfort to the afflicted, and to guide a miserable people into the paths of peace and salvation.

As this † was the season of the year which was made thus remarkable, it would be an ungrateful return for so much condescension, so much love and mercy to mankind, to pass it either in sullen indifference, or

* Luke ii. 10.

† Christmas.

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voluntary forgetfulness. A morose neglect of it would attach a greater charge of superstition upon us than on those who are censured for a just regard of this sacred festivity. Although the word *Epiphany* is now appropriated to the appearance of the star, which directed the wise men to our Saviour (of which the church appoints a commemoration) yet it was anciently called the day of his nativity. The beginning and end of which solemnity, in imitation of the Jewish custom in their feasts, may be properly called *Epiphany*, or the *Appearance*. Because they include the manifestation of Christ both in the flesh, and by the star; both as a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. His birth was declared to the Jews by the ministration of angels, and to the Eastern sages by the appearance of an unusual star, who were conducted by its motion to the place where our Lord lay. Thus was the Gentile world admitted to the presence of the Son of God, and became the adorers of a common Saviour. The distinction between Jew and Gentile was now drawing to an end; and the time was approaching when the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body with

with the Jews, and partakers of the same promise in Christ. Those who were then at a distance, were now brought near; Christ has thrown down the middle wall of partition which excluded us from the commonwealth of Israel.—Since, therefore, this star is come out of Jacob, the sceptre departed from Judah, and the law-giver from between his feet; since the day-spring from on high has visited us, and given light to those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death; since we have a sure word of prophecy in the gospel, let us take heed as unto a light which shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts; until the mists of error be totally dispelled, and we live and act as the CHILDREN OF LIGHT.—

SERMON VIII.

On the PROTECTION of GOD.

PSALM XXVII. 10.

*When my father and my mother forsake me,
then the Lord will take me up.*

SERM.
VIII.

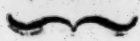


THAT which from natural weakness cannot sustain itself, by a certain natural instinct leans toward what may sufficiently uphold it. Thus the heart of man, if it find not that which is the only true support indeed, will rest upon a weak staff; chariots and horses, riches and friends, all the superficial vanities of the world, will allure it to themselves, when no permanent security appears.

BUT

BUT that our hearts, deceitful as they are, delude us not with vain confidence, we may learn from the text, where it is, and where alone, we may repose ourselves with unceasing hope and unerring assurance of security. David affirms positively, what he had found true experimentally; that, when those from whom we expect help, either will not or cannot, God both can and will help us, so far as he perceives it good, if we put our trust in him. Fathers and mothers, our nearest and dearest friends, all visible friendships, all earthly comforts, may always fail us, sometimes will fail us, and at last most certainly must fail us, leaving us destitute and helpless; but the love of God towards us is abundant, even beyond the care of the most provident father, beyond the affection of the tenderest mother.

NATURAL parents may prove unnatural, merely from the corruption of their own hearts. For though God has imprinted in the heart of men a natural affection for their offspring, in as deep and indelible characters as almost any other branch of the law of nature; yet, so untoward are they frequently in their own conceptions, that without any other direction than the

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light of natural principles, they would soon erase the impressions of the law of nature. Those who are not altogether void of natural affection, may yet be so alienated and estranged from their children, upon some personal dislike, as to forsake them: as among the Hebrews, in the instance of blasphemy, *the father's hand was to be first in the execution of his son. They, indeed, who give their earthly parents just cause to forsake them, can have little confidence, that God, as their heavenly Father, will take them up. But when parents shall withdraw their love and assistance from their children upon some small indiscretion, or venial miscarriage, or be offended at them without cause, or more than there is cause, either upon some hasty surmise of their own, or base suggestion of others (as †Saul reviled Jonathan, and threw a javelin to smite him, interpreting his friendship with David to have been a plotted conspiracy between them to deprive him of his crown and life) it is a sin not to be excused by any pretence of reason or justice.

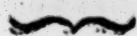
* Deuteronomy xiii. 7.

† 1 Samuel xx. 30.

How weak and how precarious is our dependence on man ! how vain our hopes when rested on so tottering a foundation ! Such, indeed, is the common friendship of the world ; whilst we are in no need of it, it overflows with protestations of love and service ; but if we begin to fail, like the Priest and Levite in the parable, it passes by without offering a hand to help us ; it is well if it does not revile us, lift up the heel against us, and endeavour to trample us yet lower in the dust of misfortune and disgrace. How unwise and imprudent, then, are we to raise to ourselves as we often do, such vast and mighty hopes on so narrow, so fortuitous a dependence ; to build a glorious fabric of towering hopes, on so weak, so sandy a foundation, and repose such trust and confidence in mutable and mortal man !

IN the twentieth psalm, we may find described the different confidences of the worldling, and the true believer ; and their different success arising from the different degrees of their confidence. *Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.*

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They are cast down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright. David and Goliath met upon these conditions; Goliath advanced against David, trusting in his armour, and in his own strength: David went out against him in the name of the Lord of Hosts, and they prospered accordingly.

*NEVER to rely on those who may deceive us, has ever been held a wholesome and politic aphorism, by the wise men of the world; to esteem all outward helps but as they are; and to use them and trust to them with such considerations. To honour our fathers and mothers; to love our friends; to pray for the lives and prosperity of others; to gather wealth by fair and just means; to raise ourselves to honours by faithful services, and by virtuous and lawful endeavours; to take our portion of innocent and regular pleasure; these we are permitted, we are obliged to do. But circumspection and carefulness must be applied, that we place not our chief felicity in the enjoyment, or please ourselves too much in the confidence of our own strength.

* Μένυσθ' ἀπιστεῖν.

Thus

Thus we must seriously consider what defects and failings, what casualties and revolutions, to which the things of this world are subject; that we may receive them with more thankfulness, use them with more moderation, and forego them with more patience and submission to the will and pleasure of God.

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THE original Hebrew verb here translated *to take up*, principally and primarily signifies, *to gather*. It might therefore allude to what *our Saviour in the gospel resembles his tender care and compassion toward the Jews, of a hen gathering her chickens under her wings. It might resemble the state of some impotent and neglected cripple, †like him that lay before the pool of Bethesda, and had neither strength in his own limbs, nor a friend to help him into the water. It might resemble also the traveller in the parable, that lay in the highway wounded by thieves, and half dead, where he would have perished, if the good Samaritan passenger had not taken him up.

* Matthew xxiii. 37.

† John v. 5.

THOUGH

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THOUGH our fathers and mothers forsake us, though all other friends and comforts fail us, yet our heavenly Father never does, never will fail or forsake those who put their trust in him. Then is his providence nearest, and his help readiest, when we are most forsaken of others, and left in all appearance most destitute of worldly succour. Whence is it, that the prophet David so frequently in his Psalms, to procure more effectual help from God, alledges that he is destitute and forsaken? And how often does the Lord himself, whose general providence watcheth over all men, even over all creatures, profess himself to be in a more peculiar manner, the father of the fatherless, and to have a greater care over the *widow, the poor, and the stranger! *The Lord† upholdeth all those that fall, and lifteth up all those that are down: he feeds the young ravens that call upon him.* The ravens are here instanced, because, of all other birds, they are observed sooner to forsake their young. If God then so sufficiently provide for the young ravens when they are forsaken, will he not much more take care of

* Psalm cxlvi. 9.

† Job xxxviii. 41. — Matthew vi. 26. — Luke xii. 24.

us? Are not we, stamp'd with his own image and likeness, more valuable with him than many ravens?

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THE love of our heavenly Father towards all mankind in general, but more especially towards those who are his children* by adoption and grace, is infinitely beyond the love of earthly parents towards their children. He can as well cease to be, as cease to love. It is impossible for him, to whom all things are possible, to deny himself. The church indeed sometimes complained of neglect; as we read that Sion said, †the Lord hath forgotten me. But it is a weakness to which during its warfare, it is sometimes subject; and it is immediately reprov'd for it by God: *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, saith the Lord.*

THE affection of parents may be so powerfully bias'd another way, that, in the

* 2 Timothy ii. 13.

† Isaiah xlix. 14.

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pursuit of other delights, in the gratification of other passions, they may either forget or much disregard their children*. But our heavenly Father takes pleasure only in the prosperity of his people. Fathers and mothers, through human ignorance, cannot fully understand the grief of their children; nor infallibly know how to apply a remedy, if they did know it. But God, who dwells in light, who is light itself, knows the inward recesses and secrets of the heart: he understands all our wants, and what supplies are most proper in our respective conditions. This his wisdom, observable in all the dispensations of his gracious providence towards his children, we may behold in his fatherly corrections. The apostle draws a comparison between the different chastisements of the fathers of our flesh, and the father of spirits. They do it after their own pleasure, †says he, that is, not always with judgment, but according to the present disposition of their own passions, either through a fond indulgence, or in a passionate frenzy: but it is not so with him, who, in all his chastisements, has an eye to our for-

* Psalm cxlix. 4.

† Hebrews xii. 9.

mer faults, regarding at once our future profit and advantage.

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OUR fathers and mothers, who are they? **Do prophets and princes live for ever?* says God by Zachariah. They all pass like a shadow, and wither like grass. When they must go, they cannot help themselves; and when they are gone they cannot help us. They are mortal men, He the Immortal God. Life is one of his absolute prerogatives. All other things that partake of life in any degree have but a derived life; and such as either shall have an end, or at least had a beginning. God alone has life in himself; and his life is measured not by a span, not by time, but is immeasurable and eternal. †He lifts up his hand (when he swears by himself, having no greater to swear by) and says, *Behold, I live for ever. His remembrance endures throughout all generations, and his years fail not.*

AND therefore when our fathers and mothers forsake us, our heavenly Father, who wants neither love, nor wisdom, nor power,

* Zechariah i. 5.

† Isaiah lvii. 15.

‡ Deuteronomy xxxii. 20.—Psalm cii. 12.—27.

nor

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nor life, but is infinite in all, we may rest assured is able to succour us, and take us up; and we have his gracious promise to fill up the measure of our assurance. He has obliged himself by promise to give us, not only all spiritual graces and comforts necessary for the everlasting salvation of our souls; but also to provide and furnish us with all the good things, and *to preserve and deliver us from all the evil things of this life; so far as in his excellent wisdom he shall see it conducive to his glory, the good of his church, and the salvation of his elect and chosen servants.

THE particular promises are various, and dispersed in many places of Scripture, that every one may gather them for his own benefit, as his occasions and condition require†. We may only mention that one general promise, which, though first delivered to Joshua in particular, yet was afterwards applied to others also, and alledged as a ground of such general duties as are common to all christians; and suits as properly as any other promise to the present

* 1 Timothy iv. 8.

† Deuteronomy xxxi. 8. — Joshua i. 5. — Hebrews xiii. 5.

argument,

argument, namely, *I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

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HAVING therefore such promises from an all-wise, loving, and omnipotent God, it behoves us to be wary and circumspect, when troubles press heavy upon us, that we complain not too distrustfully, as if God had forsaken us. And this, rather because it is an infirmity incident to very good men. **Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath his anger shut up his tender mercy?* was the complaint of David; but presently acknowledging his error, he corrected himself for it, in the immediate subsequent words,—*and I said it is mine own infirmity.* We ought by his example to silence all tumultuous thoughts, and secret murmurs of our hearts; we, who are so ready to †*charge God foolishly*, and to break out into unreasonable complaints against his most wise and holy dispensations.

As it becomes us not to be too querulous or dissatisfied with the present, so also not to be too solicitous or over anxious for the fu-

* Psalm lxxvii. 7.

† Job i. 22.

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ture. It is by no means forbid, but required rather in every man, a moderate, provident care for the acquisition, the preservation, and the disposition of the good things of this life, in an industrious, honest, and conscientious use of lawful means, leaving the success to our heavenly Father. We are certainly but very meanly persuaded of his affection towards us, and of his care over us, if we dare not trust him securely for our daily provisions, *who knows that we stand in need of all those things for which we are so anxious. It is sufficient for us in all things †by supplications and prayers for what we want, and thanksgiving for what we have received, to let our requests be made known to God, and then ‡to be careful for nothing any further, §but to cast all our care and burden upon him.

NOR let us droop or be overwhelmed with too much sorrow, if the affection of our fathers and mothers be not towards us as we think it should; if they have not discretion and foresight to give us good and orderly education, and to provide us means

* Matthew vi. 32.

† 1 Peter v. 7.

† Philipians ii. 6.

§ Psalm lv. 22.

which

which are answerable; if they are fallen into want, or otherwise disabled from doing for us what formerly they intended and we expected; if they are taken from us and from the world before we are grown up; if our friends whom we trusted have proved unfaithful, and shrunk from us in the time of need; if those proportions of wealth, honour, reputation, liberty, or whatever other worldly enjoyments we have formerly tasted be diminished; we have yet one reserve, yet one anchor of hope, which will remain immutable, even the goodness and faithfulness of our Omnipotent Father. *To him have we been left ever since we were born; he still preserves us in being; †he has not hitherto failed nor forsaken us. It is our own fault if our experience of the time past, ‡does not breed in us hope for the time to come; a hope that will never shame either him or ourselves; §that he will be our guide unto death.

||To administer to ourselves some patience amidst the various uncertainties and painful

* Hebrews vi. 19.

† Psalm xxii. 10.

‡ Romans v. 4.

§ Psalm xlviii. 14.

|| Luke xxi. 19.

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disappointments of human life, is a prudent and a necessary duty ; and not to consult with flesh and blood in seeking to relieve our necessities by engaging in any unworthy and forbidden practice. Is it possible we can be so ill-advised as to think to escape the storm when it approaches, by making shipwreck of a good conscience? Let us then, when danger or distress terrify and perplex us, betake ourselves to our heavenly Father, as young birds to the old, for succour ; to make him our refuge, our asylum, and our sanctuary. *He will gather us under his wings, and we shall be safe under his feathers ; †this faithfulness and truth shall be our shield and buckler.

ONLY let us resolve to perform our part : do faithfully what he commands ; shun carefully what he forbids ; suffer patiently what he inflicts ; and we may then be confident that he will perform his part to the utmost. That when all the world forsake us he will take us up ; take us into his care and protection here ; ‡and, if we seek it by patient continuance in well-doing,

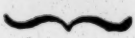
* Psalm xci. 4.

† Psalm xxxvii. 5.

‡ Romans i. 7.

take us up at last into the fellowship of that glory and honour, immortality and eternal life, which his only beloved Son has purchased, and his blessed Spirit conigned to all that love him, and trust in his mercy. To that only beloved Son and blessed Spirit, together with the eternal Father, be rendered by us and by the whole church, all honour, adoration, and power, now and evermore.

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SERMON IX.

On FALSEHOOD.

EXODUS XX. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

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THIS commandment may be considered as a security to the three which precede; establishing a judicatory where all the breaches that have been made in relation to the life, the chastity, and the goods of our neighbour, may be tried and repaired. If a man violate the sixth commandment, *and mortally smite his neighbour, *that he*

* Deuteronomy xix. 12.

die,

die, the elders of the city are charged to examine the matter, and judicially award the sentence of death. As a preservation of the seventh commandment, if a man accuse his wife, *the elders are enjoined to judge between them, and according to the evidence either chastise the man or stone the woman. And thus is the charge in defence of the eighth commandment, †*all manner of trespasses* relating to our neighbour's goods are to be brought before the judges, and *whom the judges shall condemn he shall pay double unto his neighbour.*

SERM.

XI.

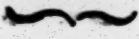
BECAUSE it is necessary that there should be proofs as well as authorities, witnesses to confirm as well as judges to punish, the violation of these laws; therefore a caution was given against bearing false testimony, that every infraction of the other three might be regulated and repaired without prevarication or ambiguity in this comprehensive commandment.

BUT because these commandments must be extended beyond their first and literal

* Deuteronomy xxii. 15, 18, 21.

† Exodus xxii. 9.

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sense, to include all those duties and prohibit all those sins which bear any resemblance with what they either enjoin or forbid; therefore this commandment may be understood to comprehend, not only all falsehood in judicial assemblies, but in the private transactions and common intercourse of men; equally condemning all false witnessing against our neighbour, and familiar and uncharitable censures.

THE affirmative part of this commandment enjoins us to speak the truth; which is the agreement between the notion and the thing conceived. This is the proper object of the understanding, when it apprehends things as they are in themselves, with their mutual relations and dependencies on each other. If we form not a right conception of that which is made by the understanding, but is antecedent to it, then we may be said to conceive that which is false. There is a metaphysical truth, which is the spring of all common principles, and upon which is grounded all our reasoning and discourses; and to which, falsehood and error may be opposed: and there is a moral truth.

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THE commandment which is now the subject of examination may be numbered with those which rather concern the deportment of our neighbour than the regulation of our private affairs. Because we enquire not properly into the nature of things, we decline into mistaken opinions and erroneous judgment; yet this is not the falsehood intended by the words of the text. That truth which is here regarded, is a disagreement between the tongue and the heart, a conformity of what we say with our thoughts and apprehensions.

WE are expressly commanded by God **to speak every man truth to his neighbour*; we are told by the wise man, that *†the lip of truth shall be established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment*; and the Psalmist insures the privilege of dwelling in God's tabernacle and resting upon his holy Hill, to *‡him that speaketh the truth from his heart*.

§*The Lord, says the prophet, is a God of truth*; and the apostle tells us, *||he cannot lie*.

* Zeck. viii. 16.

† Proverbs xii. 19.

‡ Psalm xv. 1, 2.

§ Jeremiah x. 10.—Psalm xxxi. 6.

|| Titus i. 2.

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As the infinite perfection of his knowledge creates an exact correspondence between his mind and the reality of things, so the eternal rectitude of his will causes a constant conformity between his words and intentions. Blasphemous, therefore, is that rigid predestinarian doctrine, which defies the secret and revealed decrees of God. Does he then mean to impose artificial hopes on his creatures, at once flattering them with happiness and dooming them to destruction? This is contradicted by all his transactions with the world, by all the instances of his love and mercy to mankind. * *A God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He.*

To the imitation of this divine excellence, we are exhorted by the apostle; † *put ye on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; that is, ‡ in the holiness of truth; and to speak truth to our neighbour, § because we are members one of another.*

* Deuteronomy xxxii. 4.

† Ephesians iv. 24.

‡ *Ἐν ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας.*

§ Ephesians iv. 25.

SPEECH,

SPEECH, which was given for the common benefit of man, by which he is enabled to maintain an intercourse with his fellow-creatures, to unbosom his thoughts in the sacred security of friendship, becomes too frequently the instrument of mischief, and the snare of innocence. Without an obligation to express his intention by his words, there could be no civilization in man, no society in human nature. Without this, how could he impart secrets, render mutual assistance, or attend to the call of charity ; how could he administer counsel, form compacts, or supply social agreements for the universal good. The very institution of society therefore implies, that a man may as well be a sociable creature without reason as without veracity. What assurance have we from him whom we do not understand ? And how can we understand him who means not what he says ? **If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle ?*

ALTHOUGH we are invariably bound to speak the truth, yet by no means, at all

• 1 Corinthians xiv. 8.

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times and in all places. For there is an uncharitable truth, which we must not tell, but upon necessary occasions ; not to publish the fault of another to his disgrace. In the estimation of God, and in the interpretation of Scripture, it is equally a violation of justice and veracity, to speak an untruth, and to speak a truth at an improper time, and with improper circumstances. The instance of *Doeg, the Edomite, will confirm this ; who, when he had seen David enter the house of Ahimelech, the priest, and that Ahimelech entertained him with kindness, he gave Saul, his master, a particular information of what he had seen. In this narration indeed he spake only what was true, and of what he had been an eye-witness ; yet, because it was with an injurious intention towards Ahimelech, David charged him with infamy and lies. †*Thy tongue imagineth wickedness, and with lies thou cuttest like a sharp razor ; thou hast loved unrighteousness more than goodness, and to talk of lies more than righteousness ; thou hast loved to speak all words that may do wrong, O thou false tongue.*

* 1 Samuel xxi. and xxii.

† Psalm lii. 3, 4, 5.

THE injury that a man of this description may offer to his neighbour, by uncharitably exposing him to public view, is an argument of the injustice of this practice. Fame is like a tender plant, to be reared with care, and preserved with circumspection. No man can tell the issue of a report; every trivial circumstance is exaggerated by the distorted aggravations of some, and insinuating suggestions of others, which swell it so far beyond its original proportion, that it differs altogether from its original purpose. Slander is of so rapid a growth, that the smallest portion of it, *like the grain of mustard seed in the gospel, immediately sprouts up into a tree, and can no more be reduced into its first cause, than a tree can shrink into the seed from whence it sprung. As the ruins of reputation are thus irreparable, how careful should every one be, that he pull not out one stone toward the breach, thus becoming the instrument of greater mischief than he first intended, and be answerable for all the consequent injustice.

* Matthew xiii. 32.

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IN the Levitical law, if he that knew his ox to be vicious and ungovernable, did not inclose him in some secure place, *he became responsible for any injury it might do. Let us then speak †*the truth in love*; and reflect on the unwillingness which marks even the most wary and prudent to have all their actions published. How contrary is it to the grand rule of equity, thus to blaze abroad the failings of others, when we are so desirous to conceal our own. What false drefs, what varnish and palliations do we use to hide our own guilt? That our moral imperfections are disguised with as much art as our corporal blemishes. And can we, without the grossest partiality, attempt to paint over our own infirmities, without allowing the least failing of another to be undiscovered? Are not our ways unequal, while we so industriously cover our own nakedness, and yet tear off the veil from the blushing frailties of our brother? Can there be greater inhumanity than thus to treat those of the same common nature, who we know have the same concern to preserve their reputation, and the same regret to lose it.

* Exodus xxi. 29.

† Ephesians iv. 15.

BUT

BUT there is a time, when it may be not only our privilege, but our duty, to speak that truth of our neighbour which may impair his character ; and to reveal his faults to the world, to whatever infamy they may expose him. A good man would not be an accuser, unless the promotion of the public good, or the prevention of a great evil, should require it : otherwise, he in some degree, assumes the guilt he conceals, and becomes himself an accessory to the crime.

THE obligations of public justice, are superior to those of private charity ; and, as we are not to steal for the purpose of administering to alms-giving, so we are not to redeem our brother at the expence of the public welfare. Were not this allowed, no evidence could be given against a malefactor, and discipline and good government would be subverted. Our duty to the public, therefore, obliges us to guard against so great a mischief to the community, whatever injury may fall upon the guilty. In such instances, it is a true rule, that mercy to the evil is cruelty to the innocent ; and, as in a competition of ills, we are to chuse

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the least; so of two goods, the greatest and most extensive are the most eligible.

WE are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves; thus the love of ourselves is the rule and measure of our love to our neighbour. In a great inequality of interests, charity (whose character is *not to seek her own) will prompt us to prefer a greater concern of our neighbour, rather than a small concern of our own. But, in equal circumstances, self-interest properly prevails. And it would be much for the tranquility of life, if our charity were so elevated that no man could injure the reputation of another, but where his own is endangered.

IT may thus be both lawful and expedient to speak the truth of our neighbour. And when uttered in scandal, if it so offend against this commandment, much more criminal is falsehood, because it is more directly derogatory to the purity and intention of it.

* 1 Corinthians xiii. 5.

HE who has a proper sense of integrity and justice, can scarcely forbear sometimes to wish himself sequestered from society, an outcast from the communication of man; and to exclaim with the *prophet, *O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them; for they are an assembly of treacherous men, they bend their tongue like their bow for lies, but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth.* No man, who possesses an innate reverence for truth both in his practice and opinion, can endure the accusation of falsehood; it is a stain, which in the sense of the world is not to be washed out, without pursuing the reviler with infamy and shame. Other crimes every day find powerful advocates, who contend in their justification and defence; but this, arising from the very dregs and refuse of wickedness, disdains a patronage, so disgraceful and hateful is the practice.

† *Ye shall not lie one to another.* So dangerous is this vice, that not the most pious and religious intention can reconcile it to

* Jeremiah ix. 2, 3.

† Leviticus xix. 11.

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the Deity. The man that lies, *though in zeal for the glory of God, shall be judged as a sinner. By his title, as the God of truth, he is at once engaged to abhor and to punish it. In the New Testament they are not only numbered among those who shall be †excluded the New Jerusalem, but ‡bound over to the second death, and perish in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Shall we then want arguments to dissuade from so baneful, yet so universal a custom?

To bear false witness in courts of judicature, is forbidden under severe penalties. *§Thou shalt not raise a false report; put not thine hand with the wicked, to be an unrighteous witness.* As an effectual preventative of this sin, God ordered that the same punishment should be inflicted on the false witness, ¶which, by his false testimony he aimed to bring upon the party accused. Were the same fate now the consequence of such a practice, the persons, the property, and the reputation of men would be more secure.

* Rom. iii. 7. † Revelations xxii. 15. ‡ Revelations xxi. 8.
§ Exodus xxiii. 1. ¶ Deuteronomy xix. 19.

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HE incurs the censure of a false witness, who attests what is false ; who devises evil against his neighbour without any foundation of truth. **False witnesses did rise up: they laid to my charge things that I knew not.* This was what the instruments of Jezebel practised against †Naboth, which caused his death ; and what ‡Zibah insinuated against Mephibosheth, which had almost bereaved him of his possessions.

EVERY witness is bound by oath to speak the whole truth, as well as nothing but the truth ; he bears therefore false witness if he conceal any part of it ; or if he expatiate too much in his information ; interweaving uncertainties, perverting the speeches and actions of his opponent, or aggravating them that they may appear yet worse than they are. The depositions thus become false, and misconstruction depraves what was innocently performed, or cautiously spoken. David complains of this disingenuous treatment ; §*they daily mistake my words.* The Jews dealt in the same manner with Christ, ||concerning his expression

* Psalm xxxv. 11. † 1 Kings xxi. 13. ‡ 2 Samuel xvi. 3, 4.

§ Psalm lvi. 5. || John ii. 20, 21.

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of destroying and building the temple ; understanding it to be the fabrick of the material temple, and not of the temple of his body ; thus *endeavouring to strengthen one of the greatest accusations against him.

THAT a mischievous consequence attends this sin of bearing false witness in courts of justice is too manifest to be doubted ; and the injury to which our neighbour is exposed renders it *exceeding sinful*. It not only maims the credit, but delivers him to the punishment of the law ; and according to the nature of the intended crime, it is more or less destructive. His property, his liberty, and his life are equally endangered. It is justly compared by Solomon †*to a maul, a sword, and a sharp arrow* : it is as pernicious as those instruments which have been devised for the purpose of mischief and destruction. Such is the prejudice to which every man is exposed by this infamous practice. Thus does civil society suffer ; and thus are the very foundations of justice undermined, and the administration of it obstructed. The confidence of

* Matthew xxvi. 61.

† Proverbs xxv. 18.

the innocent is too often defeated, and success attends the cause of the oppressor.

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BUT although false-witnessing is the sin directly prohibited in this commandment, yet there is no doubt that all other falsehood in judicial proceedings is indirectly condemned. It is usual in the decalogue, in one branch of a sin to include its collateral concomitants. It may therefore apply to the judge, who is required to make a full and impartial examination into the cause, that he may not pass an unrighteous sentence. By his determination the controversy is decided, and justice or injustice is executed. He must give a patient attention to the matters brought before him, and radically search both into their causes and consequences, and is directed to make **diligent inquisition* before he pronounce sentence. In this office he may well observe the example of God, who did not pass a precipitate judgment upon Sodom, †but determined to go down first, and see if they deserved it. ‡The rich man in the gospel, whose steward was accused of em-

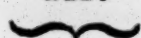
* Deut. xix. 18.

† Genesis xviii. —

‡ Luke xvi. —

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bezzling his goods, did not discharge him before he examined his accounts. **The cause which I knew not, says Job, I searched out.* But, says Solomon, on the contrary, †*he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.* Not to allow the accused to speak in his own defence was considered by ‡Festus as so unjust in the case of St. Paul, that when the Jews were importunate to hear judgment against him, he would do nothing till he produced the accusers face to face, and Paul had liberty to answer for himself. §*He that is first in his own cause seemeth just, but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.* ¶It was this partiality condemned Mephibosheth, whose story David had no sooner heard, ¶but he reversed the sentence.

It is thus the duty of the accuser to proceed in truth and charity; and by this commandment he is forbidden to prosecute another from a spirit of malice and revenge. If false witnesses be condemned, false accusers cannot be less criminal; as the latter are the cause and occasion of the former.

* Job xxix. 16.

† Proverbs xviii. 13.

‡ Acts xxv. 15.

§ Proverbs xviii. 17. ¶ 2 Samuel xvi. 3, 4.

¶ 2 Sam. xix. 29.

*This was the crime of Haman, in falsely charging the Jews with contempt and disobedience. †This was also the crime of the Jews, who made grievous and unjust complaints against St. Paul, which they could not prove. ‡This was one of the grievances of which God complained against Jerusalem, and for which, among many others, he threatened to judge her. *In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood; therefore will I scatter thee among the Heathen.*

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NOR is he who denies that in judgment, with which he is justly charged, to be deemed innocent. An untrue defence, if it be in a question of property, is prejudicial to our neighbour, whose title is thus wantonly obstructed; if it be in a question of criminal accusation, it is injurious to the government of the country, by preventing, or at least, retarding, the execution of justice, upon which the welfare of the community depends. ||Joshua therefore advises Achan to a full confession of his crime: and, although this may appear to clash with that

* Esther iii. 8.

† Acts xxv. 7.

‡ Ezekiel xxii. 9. 15.

§ Job xxxi. 33.

|| Joshua vii. 19.

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maxim of self-preservation, that no man is bound to accuse himself, yet he is not called to be his own accuser, but his own defender. And although it may be urged in favour of a criminal pleading NOT GUILTY to a true indictment, that it is matter of formality, intended only to introduce the judicial proceedings, yet it is certainly a delusion of justice; and if it be in a question of property, the denial of that usurpation with which he is justly charged, is certainly a continuation and renewal of the former injury, consequently a violation both of truth and justice.

**Thou shalt not speak in a cause to wrest judgment, says God. Solomon calls him a wicked man, †who taketh a gift to pervert the ways of judgment. Those therefore cannot be innocent, whatever plea may be advanced, who undertake the defence of an unrighteous cause; and by smooth palliations, artful suggestions, and intricate ambiguities, endeavour to recommend it to the favour of the court. ‡This was the fault of Tertulus in his pleadings against*

* Exodus xxiii. 2. † Proverbs xvii. 23. ‡ Acts xxiv. —

St. Paul, who by collusive insinuations and an artful address, would have allured the court into a revengeful accusation.

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THERE is an instance in Scripture, of improper dealing in the notaries of Artaxerxes, who pretended to find in the records of Persia, that the Jews had formerly been a rebellious people; *they were therefore prevented from building the temple. But, when Darius succeeded to the government, they could discover that the Jews had not been that seditious people, and that the building of the temple was by the decree of Cyrus†; liberty was therefore granted to finish it. Such false practices are certainly an infringement of this law, and within the compass of this commandment.

SUCH are the judicial falsehoods, which the text would primarily prohibit. Those that are extrajudicial shall be the subject of future consideration.—

* Ezra iv.

† Ezra vi.

SERMON X.

On the SAME SUBJECT.

EXODUS XX. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false-witness against thy neighbour.

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X.
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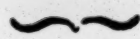
FROM those untruths which occur in judicial proceedings, we pass to those which are practised in common conversation, whether they be jocose or serious. Inasmuch as they are variations from truth (to establish which is the great end of this commandment) they are not without the imputation of guilt.

THOSE fictions of the mind, which are intended sometimes to delight and sometimes

times to instruct, are certainly beyond the reach of this law; for the parables of Scripture are of this denomination. Nor are figurative expressions, as ornaments of discourse to be included in this commandment: but such are those fictions which are false representations of real truth, and contrary to the mind and knowledge of him that utters them. All degrees of contrariety from truth are evidently unlawful, not only from the general suffrage of human nature, but from their opposition to that seriousness and gravity which dignify the character of christianity. If the apostle has pronounced *\*jesting not convenient*, because it is liable to betray us into scurrility of language, certainly all falsehood in it is yet less tolerable. He cannot be innocently facetious, who adorns his discourse with narrations absolutely false, or highly improbable, whatever degree of merriment they may excite, or whatever ingenuity they may display. But if every *†idle word* shall be accounted for in the day of judgment; those words which have neither the substance of truth, nor the property of sense, how shall we

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\* Ephesians v. 4.

† Matthew xii. 36.

admire



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admire those whose tendency is so dangerous and fatal. The prophet complained of such improper practices in the Israelites, and for which they were threatened with punishment; *\*They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies; this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.*

NOR are the fallacies intended for the benefit of our neighbour, sufficient to render this custom lawful. Although they may be profitable to those persons for whose advantage they are told, yet as they are contrary to truth, they may be pernicious to society, by rendering those external marks of communicating our thoughts, both vague and uncertain; and thus smoothing the path to imposition and deceit. We †are peremptorily warned *not to do evil that good may come.* We may learn from the general prohibitions of dissimulation and hypocrisy, that no undue falsehood, told to establish our private interest, is allowed. Self-love is the rule of kindness to our brother, to consult his advantage as far as our own;

\* Hosea vii. 3. 16.

† Romans iii. 8.

but more than we can justify in ourselves, cannot be lawfully done for him. \*We are forbidden to be false even for the cause of God; religion is not to be established on stratagem and falsehood. Job complained that his friends were †*forgers of lies against him*; although what they said was from a sense of doing service to God, yet this was a just reproof against them; ‡*will ye speak wickedly for God, and deceitfully for him?*

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THOSE who are concerned either with madmen or children, may perhaps be allowed the practice of this deception, for the purpose of reducing them to that tranquillity, which may not otherwise be attained. The sick man must sometimes be beguiled into his own good, whether by disguising the distemper, or by representing the remedy different from what it really is. How is the hypochondriac person to be soothed, but by complying with his fancies, and pretending to believe those very phantoms with which he is himself oppressed? If there be guilt in lulling the fretfulness of infancy, in quelling the rage of insanity, or

\* Romans iii. 7.

† Job xiii. 4.

‡ Job xiii. 7.



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in assuaging the tortures of melancholy, how is the duty of benevolence limited, from which neither age nor condition should be exempted! The \*answer of the Egyptian midwives to Pharoah, and the †instance of Rahab, the harlot, may confirm this habit of rendering assistance to others by means of this delusion. But there is always danger in such a practice, lest an injury be offered to sincerity and truth. For it is no argument of its propriety, if it be visibly against the rule of our duty; though it may, as in these two instances, even receive encouragement from God himself. In actions of so mingled a quality, he is prone to reward the good which is predominant, and to overlook the evil which is compassionately interwoven with it. There may indeed be many examples of this nature, but all of them would be insufficient to supersede an express command. We are to live by precept and not by example; thus, although God may sometimes appear to favour irregular actions, his general approbation of them may be as reasonably doubted, as his approbation of sin-

\* Exodus i. 18, 19.

† Joshua ii. — Hebrews xi. 31.

ners from their prosperity and success. The ways of Providence are intricate and incomprehensible ; the goodness of an action, therefore, cannot positively be defined from the encouragement it may, to our apprehension, seem to receive from God, because we cannot penetrate the reasons of his dispensations.

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It naturally follows, that we must attend to the advice of the son of Syrach, and *\*never speak against the truth ; †neither use any manner of lie, for the custom thereof is not good.* For, if those falsehoods which are the most harmless, be inexcusable, certainly those which tend to the injury of our neighbour's reputation are condemned under the penalty of this commandment. If it be our duty ‡*to speak evil of no man* ; not to invent or propagate that which is false, to the prejudice of his good name, where shall we meet with justification in the practice of it ? Does it not bereave him of the most valuable blessing of life, expose him to contempt and ignominy, and to the numberless disadvantages of a forlorn reputation ?

\* Ecclesiasticus iv. 25.

† Ecclesiasticus vii. 13.

‡ Titus iii. 2.—James iv. 11.

Good



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Good men esteem the possession of a good name in the next degree to their souls, and prefer it to property and life. An attempt to impair it is more injurious than theft or murder, for it confers an inferior sort of immortality, and makes us, even in this world, survive ourselves. This part of us alone continues verdant in the grave, when all else will be an empty void, or a floating vapour. This consideration greatly prevailed with the generous Heathens, and they have chearfully resigned their existence in contemplation of it. \*Epaminondas thus expired, confident that he left behind him a perpetual memorial of the victories which he had obtained for the service of his country.

†*The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.* ‡*Whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* A man of an evil report is a public scorn, excluded from common benevolence, both in opinion and in action, and an outlaw to civil society. A good cha-

\* Plutarch in Vit. Epam. † Prov. x. 7. ‡ Philip. iv. 8.

character is the foundation of all confidence among men, the principal wheel of every engine of domestic and commercial happiness. To rob any man of this character, then, on which his credit depends, is one of the most mischievous acts of injustice that can be devised. His ability to do good to himself, to his friends, or to his neighbours; the success of his own undertakings, his best comforts, his chief interests, and the dearest conveniences of life, sometimes his life itself, rests on the preservation of his character. Yet how does this injustice prevail in all societies and conversations of men, to their confusion and disgrace! It is so common to asperse the best of men without cause, that none are surprised at it, very few express their dislike of it, and yet fewer abhor it. But whilst this calumniator exhales a poisonous breath from his venomous heart, he is not only heard with patience, but with pleasure, applauded as a man of singular wit and exquisite talents. But is there any damage so irreparable, any wound so incurable, any scar so indelible, from which neither eminence of rank, dignity of station, sanctity of office, innocence of life; neither circumspection of behaviour, or excellence



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cellence of disposition can protect us? No force can resist, no vindication can wipe out its mischievous impression; but be the innocence it maims ever so well cured, some mark of dishonour will yet remain. Sometimes it even contaminates the blood, and transmits the injury to posterity; the child will feel for his father's disgrace, and thus be deprived of that advantage which is made by others of the unblemished reputation of their parents' virtues. Is it no crime thus to ruin a man in his dearest interest and most valuable possession; to rob his innocent offspring of that benevolence which they would have received for their father's sake, were his character not so undeservedly stained? Can we make a jest of so serious an evil? Yet there is no ornament more fashionable, no entertainment more pleasing, no contagion more universal. It is the accustomed subject of all discourse, in every society. The conversation which is founded on innocence and kindness, is abandoned from the use of men for the more ornamental excellencies of speech, for the bitter reflection, the oblique, the invidious suggestion, the private whisper, or the public hiss. Justice and truth are unimportant

important considerations, and might thus be erased without loss from the volume of christian virtues.

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WE are forbidden to *\*go up and down as tale-bearers among our neighbours*; and it is a peculiar qualification for entering the tabernacle of God *†that he slandereth not his neighbour*. The apostle accounts railing and reviling, which are the usual appendages of slander, among those works of the flesh, which will exclude men *‡from the church here, and §from the kingdom of heaven hereafter*; for *||in the day of judgment by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned*.

THIS sin is frequently committed, either by charging our neighbour with crimes of which he is not guilty, or by misapplying some innocent action. To accuse him falsely is so much the more injurious, because it is unmerited. The mischievous effect of which, both ¶Joseph and \*\*Jere-

\* Leviticus xix. 16. † Psalm xv. 3. ‡ 1 Corinthians v. 11.

§ 1 Corinth. vi. 10. || Matt. xii. 37. ¶ Genesis xxxix. —.

\*\* Jeremiah xxxvii. —.



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miah found in a prison. It also brought the whole nation of the Jews into disgrace with Ahasuerus, \*almost to their perpetual ruin. The Devil is particularly denominated †*an accuser of the brethren*; ‡*when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own*. Thus §he represented the piety and devotion of Job as mercenary, the effect merely of self-interest and design. The Jews put a similar misconstruction on our Saviour's miracles, ||pronouncing them to be magic and imposture, and ascribing his benevolent purposes to the power of the Devil. ¶*Who so privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I destroy*. What feuds have such men created in the world! what discord in families! what enmity with neighbours! True indeed is the observation of Solomon, that \*\**a whisperer separateth chief friends*; and ††*the words of the whisperer are as wounds*. He who is conscious of guilt, cannot endure the innocence of others; he endeavours to reduce other characters to his own level; and the history of mankind teaches us, that

\* Esther iii. 8.

† Revelations xii. 10.

‡ John viii. 44.

§ Job i. 9.

|| Matthew xii. 24.

¶ Psalm ci. 6.

\*\* Proverbs xvi. 28.

†† Proverbs xviii. 8.

the highest, the most virtuous, the most eminent of men, are the most envied, the most hated, and most exposed to calumny, detraction, and malevolence.

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*\*Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out; so, where there is no tale-bearer the strife ceaseth. †Whether it be to friend or foe, talk not of other mens' lives, for he hath heard and observed thee.* For although defamatory speeches may not excite him to revenge, yet they always cause disturbance and uneasiness of mind; and christianity, which is the most amiable of all institutions, forbids us to do any thing ‡*whereby we may grieve one another.* There can be no evidence of a bad disposition more convincing than a general propensity to this vice. §*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* The wit of man more easily inclines to satire than to praise; but when it does commend, how awkwardly and ungracefully it comes!

It is an argument of a degenerate mind, patiently to hear the evil with which our

\* Proverbs xxvi. 20.

† Ecclesiasticus xix. 8, 9.

‡ Romans xiv. 15.

§ Matthew xii. 34.



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neighbour is charged, rather than good. At the same time they have so much justice as to hate those that propagate ill reports, and so much wit as to conclude that the same persons will revile them in another place. The good that is said of others is easily forgotten, but the evil remains with all its aggravations. It is too true, that he whose guilty conscience reflects dismal images of himself, is desirous of imposing some ugly shape on human nature, and believes that no man can deserve a good character, because he dare not claim it himself. We look with an envious eye upon the good of others, we think that their reputation obscures it, that their commendable qualities will not be perceived, and therefore we strive to cast a cloud over it, that the brilliance of their virtues may not dazzle them. This is the cause why they so greedily entertain, and so industriously publish what may contribute to that purpose; and thus to raise themselves upon the ruins of their brother's reputation. This was the occasion of Daniel's accusation; \*because he was preferred to the presi-

\* Daniel vi.

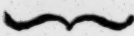
dents and princes, therefore they charged him with disobedience and contempt. The man of rank and dignity is an obstruction to those who desire the same distinctions; he is apparently rendered unworthy of what he has, that others more unworthy may succeed him. But how cruel is the pleasure thus to sport with all that is valuable and excellent in life, to gratify an invidious passion; and to amuse the time by playing perpetually on that string which creates the most merriment. \**As a mad-man who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death; so is a man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, am not I in sport?* Whenever therefore we accuse another of a crime, though it be in the privacy of retirement, or in the security of friendship, let us speak as if we were upon oath; for we are seen and heard, and our words are not disregarded.

BEFORE we say what is ill of any man, it may be useful to consider whether he has not done us some act of kindness; and whether we may not at some future period

\* Proverbs xxvi. 18. 19.—The Septuagint renders it, *so is the man that defameth his neighbour.*



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become acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him ; and let us reflect, whether in the change of human affairs, we may not at some time require his favour and advice. The mischiefs to which every sin subjects us, are sufficient punishments of themselves, and need no aggravation. Let us therefore rather accustom ourselves to pity the faults, and be concerned for the evils of others, than to take pleasure in publishing their real crimes, much less to load them with false accusations.

To prevent the evil of defamation, whenever we hear our neighbour reviled, if we know any good of him let us fail not to divulge it. It is always more humane and more honourable to defend rather than to accuse, to vindicate rather than reprove. It is better to preserve the credit of a bad man, than to stain the reputation of the innocent. His good and bad actions should be fairly exposed, if he must be the subject of scrutiny. For, if all the passionate speeches, all the froward and imprudent actions, all that has been said or done improperly in the whole life of the best man should be heaped at once upon him, he  
would

would appear like a madman or a fury: but if his life be fairly represented, and his virtues put in competition with his infirmities, the picture would be a just resemblance.

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HAVING thus considered the nature of truth, to establish which in the world we are directed by this commandment, let us speak it freely and openly; neither disclose the secrets of other men with which we are entrusted, nor publish his faults when it may answer neither the end of justice or charity. Let us not proclaim all the good we know in ourselves, through a spirit of vanity and ostentation; nor all the ill, which would render us in time regardless of censure, and as hardened as the Jews, \*of whom the prophet declared, that their sin was as *that of Sodom, they hide it not*. There are many things which it is by no means the part either of a good or a wise man to divulge. †*It is a fool that travails with a word, as a woman doth with a child, till it be brought forth; ‡for there is a time to keep silence, as well as a time to speak.*

\* Isaiah iii. 9. † Ecclesiasticus xix. 10, 11. ‡ Eccle. iii. 7.



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LET us then be always what we seem, and seem always what we are. \*This is that manifestation of the truth which St. Paul approves, and which he opposes to *handling the word of God deceitfully*. He was remarkable for the openness of his speech, and the simplicity of his language, through all the labours of his ministry. †But St. Peter under the apprehension of danger, denied and forswore his master; and afterwards, in fear of those of the circumcision, withdrew himself from the Gentiles, to create in the Jews a belief of his being of their opinion concerning Gentile-uncleanness; into which also was Barnabas led by his dissimulation. And thus the Gnostics professedly avowed this principle of hypocrisy in cases of danger. But we are commanded not only not to deny the truth, but to lay aside whatsoever may be instrumental to the dissimulation of our thoughts, ‡for which may tend to delude other men with false appearances; the end of which is not to inform but to deceive; not to obscure that which we ourselves think, but to make that seem to them which we think not. Eleazar

\* 2 Corinthians iv. 2.

† Matthew xxvi.—Galatians ii. 12, 13.

‡ 1 Peter ii. 1.

could

could not be persuaded to say that he had eaten of the flesh taken from the sacrifice, commanded by the king, though his life was endangered by it ; but made this noble and generous reply,—*\*It becometh not our age in anywise to dissemble, whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, being four-score years old and ten, were now gone to a strange religion, and so they through mine hypocrisy should be deceived by me.* He was what *his age required* of him, and purchased not his life with the loss of his integrity.

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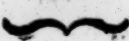
LET us then speak in simplicity and singleness of heart, without any ambiguous, any deceitful expressions, that our words may be the interpreters of our mind. As truth is always the same, so should be the representations of it. The inward thought and the outward appearance, between which is the seat of moral truth, must bear one impression, and one character, of a single tongue and a single heart. It is St. Paul's caution to the deacons, *†not to be double-tongued* ; and the son of Syrach pronounces *‡a woe to the sinner that goeth two ways.*

\* 2 Maccabees vi. † 1 Timothy iii. 8. ‡ Ecclesiasticus ii. 12.

And



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\*And this was a frequent subject of complaint to David and to †Jeremiah.

OF what censure then are they worthy, who profess the ways of deceit, and who teach the arts of hypocrisy; who have introduced mental equivocations and secret interpretations into religion; and who justify the use of these more refined degrees of artifice and falsehood? That we may not be found transgressors of this commandment, let our words and our mind bear one interpretation; and at all times, and on all occasions, without fear or collusion, speak the truth from our hearts,

\* Psalm xxviii. 3.—lv. 20.      † Jeremiah ix. 8.

SERMON

# SERMON XI.

On SWEARING.

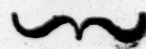
LEVITICUS XIX. 12.

*Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.*

**T**O preserve the honour due to the sacred majesty of God, and to impress the minds of men with an awful reverence of his divine authority, he has strictly prohibited the familiar use of his name. He has threatened to charge those with guilt, who either designedly affix it to that which is evidently false, or who wantonly profane it in common conversation. Convinced that  
vengeance

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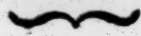
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vengeance awaited those who swore by the name of God, the Jews, considering the High-priest alone sufficiently sacred to utter it, usually swore by the creature. But it does not appear, either by the light of reason, or the authority of Scripture, that God has delegated to any of his creatures, however holy, the power to search the heart, or to punish perjury, which every oath implicitly acknowledges. Yet this observation may tend to restrain the licentiousness of such practice, and teach those who accustom themselves to this sin, to use the name of God with more respectful submission.

THAT in every instance it is not unlawful to swear, the examples of holy men and of \*God himself will sufficiently prove. It may not be improper in courts of judicature, for the investigation of truth, without which there could be no decision, no determination of right and wrong. In private concerns an oath may sometimes be necessary to preserve the reputation, and to enforce the credibility of those who use it. But in all cases, the conditions intimated by

\* Hebrews vi. 17.

the prophet must be rigidly observed, \*and thou shalt swear the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness. He that swears not *in truth* is perjured; he that swears *in judgment* is in danger of perjury; and he that swears not *in righteousness*, but either on account of private interest or affection, and not with a design to establish right, is unjust. Though an oath made therefore in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness, may be warrantable in necessary instances, yet where there is no regard to these conditions, it is presumptuous and vain. An oath thus made advances the honour of God, as it is an acknowledgment of his truth, his wisdom, his justice, and his power; but a false, a rash, and unrighteous oath, is a virtual denial of all those attributes, which are the glory of the divine nature.

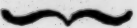
THERE is a double prohibition in the words of the text; one against perjury, the other against profane swearing.

HE is perjured in a degree which admits of no extenuation, who asserts that upon

\* Jeremiah iv. 2.



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oath which he knows to be wrong, or promises what he never intends to perform. Other perjuries are shrouded under some pretence, but where is the plea for this? To call God to attest the truth of what he knows to be false, and to imprecate his curse on him for insincerity (which every oath implies) insults his truth, and impeaches his justice.

HE who swears to a circumstance, of the certainty of which he is doubtful, abuses that confidence which the usual estimation of an oath deserves; and he who uses equivocation or mental reservation, by which he wilfully misunderstands, or wantonly perverts the sense designed. It has been laid down as an established rule, that all departure from the simplicity of an oath is a degree of perjury, as it overthrows the great end and use of it, which is *for \*confirmation, and to put an end to strife*. Hence that confidence which it ought naturally to create, is betrayed; there can be no assurance of what is so sacredly affirmed; and it cannot be known in what sense and with what reserve

\* Hebrews vi. 16.

it is taken. Were such practices admitted without incurring the danger of perjury, an oath would be the most specious and effectual way to delude the world, and would prove, instead of the greatest security, the greatest snare to mankind. \**Who, says David, shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord? He that hath not sworn deceitfully. Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not; that is, who after he had bound himself by an oath, had rather perform it, than violate his faith for worldly considerations.*

THAT perjury is a crime of the worst description, appears from the third commandment; †the explication of which very plainly intimates that the primary, if not only intention of it, is to prohibit the sin of perjury. The phrase of taking God's name in vain, is only used in this sense in Scripture. ‡Agur begged a competence from God, lest he should be *poor*, and *steal*, and *take the name of his God in vain*; that is, lest poverty should tempt him to steal, and stealth should involve him in perjury,

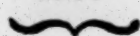
\* Psalm xxiv. and xv. † Matt. v. 33. ‡ Proverbs xxx. 9.

when



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when examined upon oath concerning that which was stolen. It was a custom among the Jews to tender an oath to him that was suspected of theft. On this account the thief and perjured man are mentioned together by the prophet. And it will be found that the original word rendered *vain*, in the third commandment, is used in the ninth for *false*\*.

BUT the criminality of this sin will further appear if it be considered as a dishonour to God. He is invoked in every oath as a witness to attest the truth of what is affirmed, and the sincerity of what is promised. He is appealed to as a judge to avenge the falsehood. Thus does the perjured man maim his attributes, suspect his veracity, defy his authority, and provoke him to punish his impiety in the moment he commits it. Does he therefore patronize perjury, or can he not discover treachery; and is he not able to punish those who incautiously challenge him to inflict his severest judgments?

שנא \*

It

It is not only the highest affront to God, but of the most pernicious consequence to men. It subverts the foundations of public peace and justice; it undermines the private security of every man's life and fortune; and it severs asunder the most indissoluble bonds of civil society. What can protect the most innocent? It is a secret stab, against which there is no possibility of defence.

THERE is nothing which more highly provokes God to punish the sinner, even in this life, with some remarkable judgment. It almost necessitates him to thunder down from heaven in some extraordinary manner, to vindicate his power and justice, which are thus so wantonly despised; lest it should be too popular an opinion that there is no God, or that he hears not their impious execrations. But, let us consult the Scriptures for instances of such punishment,\* and we shall find that the three years famine in Israel, was for breach of oath to the Gibeonites; †as well as Zedekiah's misery, together with the captivity of Judah. But because he does not always punish perjury

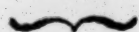
\* 2 Samuel xxi. 1.

† 2 Kings xxv.



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in this life; some who are not affected with the sense of a punishment which is distant and invisible, do not hesitate to commit it; the municipal laws of the land, therefore, have justly and reasonably provided a temporal punishment for a crime so mischievous and fatal.

THE other prohibition in the text is against profane swearing, or using the name of God lightly or wantonly in common conversation. \**Swear not all*, is the command of Christ; and which is evidently directed against this practice. *Let your communication*, says he to his disciples, *be yea, yea; nay, nay*: †and it is the caution of St. James.

OUR ‡Saviour is recorded to have answered to the adjuration of the High-priest, which was the Jewish custom of exacting the truth in public cases. And St. Paul swore more than once by the Majesty of Heaven. But whoever carelessly swears in his common discourse is guilty of a direct violation of this law. To call the Supreme Authority as a witness to every trifling concern, even to our weakest absurdities, only to fill up

\* Matthew v. 34. † James v 12 ‡ Matthew xxvi. 63.

the vacuities of idle conversation, argues a very mean esteem of it. But thus does the profane swearer; he invokes his Maker, like the meanest and most despicable being, to bear testimony to that, which when attested, is most insignificant and trivial. While he pretends to acknowledge his divinity, he insults his most sacred commands; and he owns him only to abuse him.

LET it therefore concern those who accustom themselves to this odious and dangerous vice, to consider the dishonour, the irreverence, and contempt, they offer to their Maker; and the impiety, the injustice, and presumption they exercise themselves. They will then no more appeal to him, the Lord of heaven and earth, in matters of no consideration; they will not summon their Omnipotent Creator, as if he were a slave either to their pleasure or their passions. They will then perceive how unlawful is such a practice, how great and irreparable a breach it is of a positive law, what an impious derogation of the honour and dignity of God, and how vile and contemptible it renders that sacred name, which ought to be mentioned only in terms of reverence and adoration.



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XI.  


THE end of an oath being a confirmation of something in doubt, if it answer not this purpose, it is at once unreasonable and unprofitable, and an argument of his imprudence at least who thus vainly makes use of it. It is \*an observation not more old than true, that no man is less trusted than he who accustoms himself to swear, which is confirmed by the experience of every day. An honest man is so well satisfied with his own sincerity, that he accounts it, as truly it is, needless to swear (which is the greatest security to be given by man) as a confirmation of what he affirms in common conversation. He values his simple word and regards it (as every man's word ought to be) a sufficient pledge of the truth of his assertions.

BUT common swearing is not only injurious to those who practice it, but ungrateful also to those who hear it. It cannot be presumed that any man of sobriety and consideration can patiently and unconcernedly hear the honour of his God debased, and his name profaned: that God, for whom he entertains the most holy, and submissive veneration. To be a constant witness to

\* Theophylactus.

an abuse of the God which other men adore, and to hear him dishonoured whom the rest of mankind profess to reverence and fear; to know upon every occasion that the authority of his Creator is prostituted by the most indecent language, and his sacred name invoked in the most irreverent and impious expressions, must in time produce a sense of shame, even in a bad mind, and always prove an irreconcilable disgust in a good one. He who has endeared himself by so many transcendent acts of mercy and love, he who justly claims the character of the greatest benefactor and friend to mankind, so far from deserving such contempt and insult, that his name ought to be held in a manner so sacred, as not to be uttered without a sentiment of devotion.

THE pursuit of this practice not only does not answer, but perverts the original design. Other sins may plead the satisfaction they produce, or the temporal advantage they procure. The voluptuary gratifies his taste with all the variety of sensual delights, and the covetous man grovels in the accumulation of his wealth; the drunkard indulges in the excellence of his wines, and the ambitious man in the boundless elevation



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XI.

tion of his views. But the common swearer has nothing in exchange for his soul ; no natural inclination encouraged, nor profit to be derived from it. He sins only for the sake of sinning. He can plead no temptation as a mitigation of his crime ; he cannot pretend to have been overpowered by the violence of his passion ; the strong bias of a vicious inclination is no plea to him ; his nature does not prompt him to it, his bodily disposition cannot incline him to it. That, therefore, which may in some degree be admitted in extenuation of other sins, will not avail the common swearer.

To secure us from the commission of so awful a crime, is to possess our souls with a reverence for God. If we are affected with a proper sense of the holiness of his nature, and the supremacy of his authority, we shall check our presumptuous profanation of them ; and appeal to him, whenever our necessities require it, as the sanctity and eminence of his person requires ; and invoke him not in trivial or unimportant matters, but with pious affections towards him, and self-degradation towards ourselves. Thus will the use of his name occasion the elevation of our thoughts to him.

When we are once satisfied of our own integrity, no man will mistrust us; and an oath for confirmation will be then as unnecessary as profane. \* *Accustom not thy mouth to swearing, says the wise man, neither use thyself to the naming of the Holy One; for, as a servant that is continually beaten, shall not be without a blue mark, so he that sweareth and nameth God continually, shall not be faultless: a man that useth much swearing shall be filled with iniquity, and the plague shall never depart from his house: if he shall offend, his sin shall be upon him; and if he acknowledge not his sin, he maketh a double offence; and if he swear in vain, he shall not be innocent, but his house shall be full of calamities. There is a word that is cloathed about with death, God grant that it may not be found in the heritage of Jacob, for all such things shall be far from the godly, and they shall not wallow in their sins. Use not thy mouth to intemperate swearing, for therein is the word of sin.*

It is an observation of an †antient, equally wise and just, that from a common custom of swearing, men easily advance into perjury; “therefore,” says he, “if thou

\* Ecclesiasticus xxiii. 9.

† Hierocles.

wouldest



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XI.  


wouldest not be perjured, do not accustom thyself to swear." Other sins are acts of disobedience, but this is an open contempt of God, and a defiance of his authority. Let us then so carefully conduct ourselves, if we have any regard for the honour of the Almighty, or any concern for our own character both here and hereafter, as to avoid this dangerous and blasphemous vice; by which we proclaim the invalidity of our own words, and subject ourselves to perpetual confusion. Neither let us permit those under our protection and care to familiarise themselves to so disgraceful a habit without reproof, which we cannot more effectually do, than by avoiding it ourselves. Thus would the name of God be more honoured, our own words more credited, and our salvation more secured. The laws both of God and man directly prohibit it; and as the latter has provided a temporal, so has the former an eternal punishment. That we may incur the sentence of neither, let us set a watch before our mouths, and keep the door of our lips; at all times regard our ways, that we offend not with our tongues.

*END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.*

# SERMONS,

BY

*The Rev. THOMAS HARWOOD,*

LATE OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AND

MASTER OF LICHFIELD SCHOOL.

---

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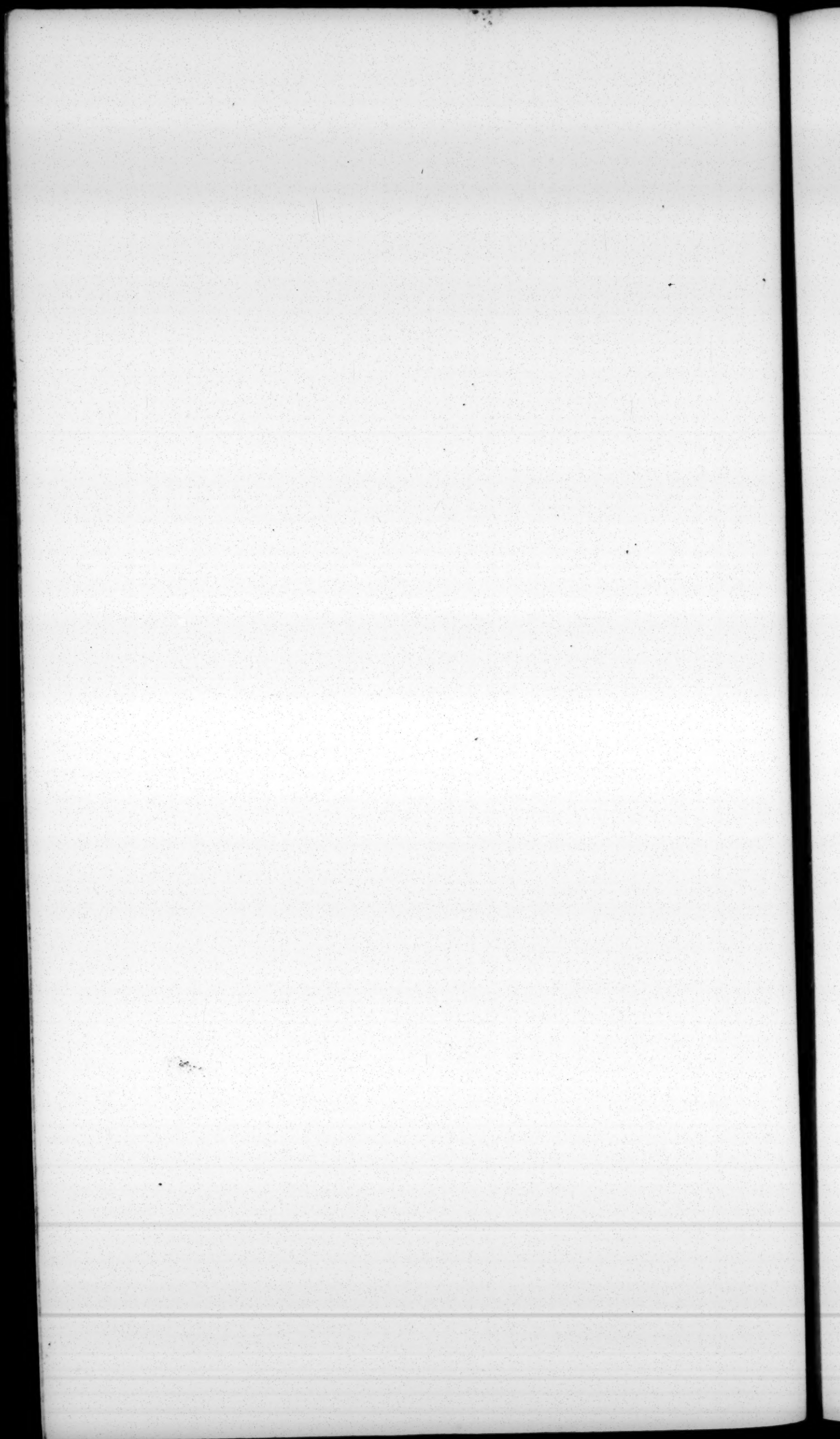
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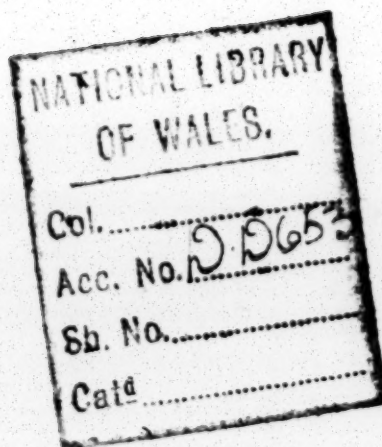


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# SERMON I.

ON GRACE.

---

2 PETER, III. 18.

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of  
our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—*

IT appears from the beginning of this chapter, that St. Peter conversed with some who doubted of the day of Judgment: and to assure them of the certainty of it, he announced the final Destruction of the wicked at that day; and exhorted them to avoid it by a speedy repentance, because the day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night, suddenly and unexpectedly, when the heavens will be dissolved, the elements consumed, and the

VOL. II.                      B                      earth

SERM.

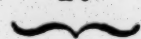
I.





SERM.

I.



earth burned. He urged them to diligence therefore, that they might be found of him without spot and blameless. He cautioned them to avoid the errors of the wicked, to hold fast their profession, nor be led aside into the wilderness of Apostasy. In augmentation of grace the character of Christianity consists, infallibly distinguishing the regenerate from the unregenerate, the true Christian from the false pretender, the elect from the reprobate.

IT is the favourite practice of some men to plant trees in their grounds, that they may be shaded in the summer from the scorching beams of the sun, and defended in the winter from the tempests of the north. But God delights not to see such trees in his walks, which bear only green leaves and glorious blossoms: such as satisfy themselves with pharisaical hypocrisy, and fruitless formalities. He will not allow such to grow in the paths which lead to his kingdom. When our Saviour came to the fig-tree expecting fruit, but finding nothing but leaves, he instantly pronounced sentence upon it,

*Let*

*\*Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever.* Let all hypocrites and fruitless believers beware the same condemnation, and while the time of grace shall last, work out their salvation; that when our Saviour comes, they may not be found, like the fig-tree, making a shew of piety and apparent sanctity, with the verdant and fruitless leaves of hypocrisy. But let us be, like trees in their growth, faithful to all good works; and manifesting our faith, not by a dead, speculative, and barren, but by a lively, active, and operative belief, † faith consummate by love. The divorce of faith and good works, ‡ in the opinion of St. James, is as destructive to religion, as the separation of the soul and body, to life. It is expedient therefore, that we testify our faith by fruits of piety, equity, and sobriety, to God, to our own consciences, and to the world.

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To say indeed, that a Christian can attain to a perfection of grace in this life, is an inexplicable solecism in divinity.

\* Matthew xxi. 19.

† Galatians v. 6.

‡ James ii. 26.



SERM.

I.

Does not \* St. Paul bid us run, which proves that we have not yet reached the goal of perfection? † Does he not bid us fight, which proves that we have not yet gained the victory and conquest over it? And does not St. Peter in the text bid us grow, which proves that we have not yet arrived at the full growth of perfection? The best of us, are but infants in goodness, and novices in the duty of religion.

HE whose resolutions of rectitude flow from the purest motives, will strive to grow in grace, that he may be a helper in the church of God; to strengthen the weak brethren, and comfort the afflicted. That man will have great cause to rejoice, who has been an instrument of promoting the growth and increase of grace in any of his fellow creatures. He will not be satisfied with that portion, which he already possesses, but will labour to improve it, and will be insatiably covetous to obtain more and more of it. He will every day endeavour to be more holy,

\* 1 Corinthians ix. 24.

† 1 Timothy vi. 12.

more heavenly minded, more patient, more temperate and sober, more frequent at the holy temple, and more zealous and fervent in prayer and the service of God. That he may thus be a pattern for others to imitate; that the weak may be strengthened by his virtues, and by his good works of mercy and charity which they shall behold, *\*glorify God in the day of visitation*: that he may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble,† by the comfort wherewith he himself is comforted of God.

This is the moment of time, in which all eternity, either of life or death, depends. Certain it is, that he who has promised, and can give us a crown of life, if we are faithful unto death, will be as faithful as he is able to perform that promise. He has said, what no Prophet, no Apostle ever said of himself, *I am the resurrection and the life,*

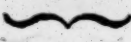
The first dawnings of the light of the gospel were so glorious, when christianity,

\* 1 Peter ii. 12.

† 2 Corinthians i. 4.



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I.  


like *the day-spring from the east*, had enlightened the world, and discovered those glad tidings which accompanied it, of salvation to mankind, that there was no wonder whole nations were converted, and multitudes so readily embraced it, being at once transported with the purity of its doctrine, and the holiness of their lives who preached it. Although it was their duty, it was also a great instance of divine providence, that by their religious demeanour and extraordinary piety, christianity might be firmly planted; and that the professors of it might be faithful copies for all succeeding generations to transcribe. Holiness was so habitual and piety so frequent, as St. Paul might justly enjoin, that if a brother walked disorderly, they should avoid his company. He did not deny them to associate with heathens, for ~~then~~ they must have retired from the world, but they were not to be familiar with or salute a disorderly Christian. This rule of the Apostle was observed, as long as the church retained its original purity. But when the primitive innocence which so eminently adorned it, was lost; various were the abuses which prevailed and

and the corruptions which disgraced it. Succeeding ages became so cold in christianity, so inattentive to spiritual duties; there was so visible and general a decay of Christian piety and charity; that if they observed that canon of St. Paul, and refused to hold any conversation with an adulterer or vain swearer; an oppressor, a perjured or a covetous person, they must have abandoned human society, and have lived, like anchorites, in unfrequented and inhospitable deserts. As if the life of christianity was gradually extinguishing, and the essence of its doctrines destroyed by the very growth and increase of its name: and as if the multitude of its believers had utterly annihilated even the profession itself in its proper and genuine operations. Never was there a greater necessity of enforcing this precept of the Apostle, *Grow in Grace*; never certainly more need to urge it, when the declension of piety and morality, and the abuse of christianity, are so flagrant.

It is an old observation, almost universally true of the greatest number of christians, that *those are the best who are*



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*not extremely wicked.* He who is not a thief, a murderer, a drunkard, or even as the publican, is accounted an excellent and religious person. He who is but better than the dregs of the age; whose religion is a degree above profaneness; whose sobriety is only not excess and intemperance; whose discourse is not with swearing, though it does not edify; whose devotion is unfrequent and charity ostentatious, exercising the negative duties of religion is a Saul among the rest of the people, and stands eminently conspicuous in the corrupted state of piety and virtue. But what is now rare and commendable in the life and conversation of men, would have been censurable in the primitive times of christianity, and have been exposed to the severe reproof of an Apostle.

The precept, *Grow in Grace*, is therefore applicable to all men, whatever may be their rank and attainments. For in whom is there not rather a decay, than growth in grace to be found? They who were once constant in the duties of religion, who were diligent hearers of the holy word of God, frequently become careless and

and indifferent. But is it less powerful to work their faith, that they less frequent it? is prayer to be less effectual, that they are less exercised in it? or is reading the scriptures less profitable for the increase of their knowledge, that they have laid it aside; that they become ignorant, almost as pagans, in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

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He who continues in the pursuit of virtue, will not be like Hezekiah's sun, that went backward; or Joshua's that stood still; but like David's sun, that rejoiced as a giant to run his course. He will not resemble the tall and beautiful cypress, bearing leaves, but producing no fruit. He will proceed from strength to strength, and be as deservedly commended by our Saviour, as the church of Thyatira, whose works were more at last than \* at first.

It was † the motto of ‡ a great King, and it ought to be the resolution of every Christian, to strive to perfection. In the

\* Revelations ii. 19.

† Charles the fifth:

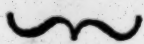
‡ *Plus ultra.*

pursuit



SERM.

I.



purfuit of which, no man muft recoil. He muft endeavour to quicken the languor of his fpirits ; to gird up the loins of his mind ; to ftrengthen the weaknefs of his hands, and the feeblenefs of his knees, by public exercifes of prayer and private meditations ; by frequently vifiting God's holy temple, and by the performance of every religious duty.

The knowledge of our time which has been mifufed, will be an excellent prefervative againft the prodigality of it ; and will caufe every man to labour in redeeming and improving it. This examination will adminifter very great confolation to that Chriftian, who fhall find by fearching into his own heart, and impartially inquiring into his own thoughts, that he is a growing branch in the field of God, bearing much fruit. By this growth, he may be affured, that he has the fpiritual life of grace and regeneration, bringing joyful and confolatory tidings to the foul: he may thus know, that his name is written in the book of life, as the Son of God and Heir of Heaven. It will render that path fmooth which was before rugged ;

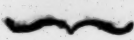
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it will strew that way with roses which before perplexed with thorns ; it will make that wilderness, through which we pass to the promised land, delightful and inviting, as the pleasant walks in the field of Elysium. It will sweeten the bitterness of conscious thought, and revive the spirits of a drooping heart ; it will raise us from the dust of death, to seat us upon the rock of Christ. There the tempestuous storms of fury and malice, and the boisterous waves of this troublesome world, will not affect us. No tongue can express, and no heart conceive the inestimable pleasure of that comfort, which is communicated to a Christian, by a sensible knowledge of an increase of grace ; it is that stream of delight, which coming from the banks of Heaven, and flowing from the fountain of goodness, waters and refreshes the faithful heart.

He who has grown in grace, can digest stronger points of reprehensions and exhortations : when he can brook the threats as well as the promises of the gospel : when he can receive harsh doctrines, mortifications, and self-denials, which are  
terrifying



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I.  


terrifying to the flesh, as well as pleasing promises which are refreshing to the soul: when he can endure rigorous precepts for the reformation of his life, as well as softening sentences for the salvation of his soul. Having accomplished these noble resolutions, he becomes more serviceable to the church of God; he can then strengthen his weak brethren, raise up the fallen, comfort the afflicted by exhortations and prayers. His love is then more extensive and universal, from the love of a few select friends to the love of many, both friends and enemies. It renders his devotion more attentive, his zeal for the house of God more fervent, and all his Christian virtues more manifest and exemplary. His patience becomes more meek, his humility yet more humble; when it is found, with Job upon the dunghill, in a perilous and afflicted state, it flourishes with unfading verdure, and grows in favour both with God and man. To bear with firmness the weight and pressure of affliction, to receive wrongs with calmness and endure injuries without murmuring, are proofs of our growth in grace. He remains unshaken in the severity

verity of adversity, unruffled in the tempests of misfortune; impetuous reproofs cannot inflame him to anger, imperiousness of spirit cannot provoke him to resistance; sufferings and afflictions are blessings rather than evils and punishments; persecution in the name of Christ and for the sake of the gospel, is his triumph and dignity.

SERM.

I.

The scriptures afford abundant instances of those, whose growth in grace was manifest and prevalent. Job was arrived to such perfection, as to resolve,\* though the Lord would kill him, to put his trust in him. David, though a man after God's own heart, was a pelican in the wilderness, and hunted like a bird upon the top of the mountains. The primitive martyrs endured even with alacrity and cheerfulness the severest trials, nor could the malice of a Nero, a Diocletian, or a Domitian, pervert their integrity. They well knew, that if they suffered with Christ, they should also reign with him.

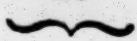
Religion is the only instrument which will naturally produce the perfection of a

\* Job xv. 5.

Christian.



SERM.

I.  


Christian. After a state of sin, who can instantly become a saint? The work of heaven cannot be performed by a flash of lightning, or by a small shower of affectionate rain. God has ordained holy intervals, and appropriated stated portions of time for the service of religion; that we may be weaned by degrees from the charms of pleasure, and drawn from the delusions of the world; may remember the end of our Creation, and do honour to our Maker. They must not either be neglected through indifference, nor complied with through form of godliness, that custom may not be violated; but all other convenient portions of time must be hallowed with little retirements of our thoughts, and short conversations with God; that even our works of nature may pass into the relations of grace, the actions of our calling may contribute to the prize of our high-calling, and the business of this life may conduce to the accomplishment of the next.

The character of a primitive Christian was a just compendium of the religion itself; he considered the most minute, as well as important articles of his duty comparatively

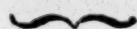
paratively binding. His food was the promoter of temperance and sobriety ; his humiliations were acts of obedience, his labours profitable, and his alms charitable ; and whether he eat or drank, whether he slept or waked, or whatever else he did, it was all for the glory of God. For which purpose he considered religion as no trouble or hindrance to his engagements, nor did he think his alms expensive, or what he bestowed upon the poor as lost for ever, or his prayers to God as wearisome and tedious. He endeavoured to make these and all other duties of religion, his care and his employment, the business and end for which he came into the world. He always remembered to perform his proper work, to serve the designs of his Maker, and follow his appropriated occupation of life ; to worship God, to live soberly and piously, to benefit and do good to his brother in distress. He knew that he was sent into the world for the practice and enlargement of charity ; that he resembled a traveller, whose journey is interrupted with difficulties and pursued with a mixture of pleasure and pain ; that the world to him was nothing but an inn, where he might repose



SERM. repose himself for a night, and leave all  
 I. behind him in the morning; that he had\*  
*here no continuing city, but was to seek one  
 to come.*

Such is the condition of human life, and such its variations. To pass through pleasant fields as a landlord or a labourer; to lodge for a short time in a fair palace upon beds of down, or in meaner cottages with harder and scantier provisions; to be refreshed in the way at plentiful tables, or with spare diet: it is then therefore only we perform our right employment, when we offer our prayers to God with thankfulness and devotion; when we exercise the works of mercy and charity to our neighbour; and by restraining the impetuosity of our affections, and controuling the violence of our passions, become, like to God, in the imitation of his Son. Then is his spirit like a new soul within us; and we have new appetites and new pleasures: when the things of the world grow unfavourý; and the things of religion are delightful: when our temptations to former

\* Hebrews xiii. 14.

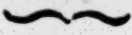


sins seldom return, and never prevail: when we perform actions of virtue and piety, speedily, frequently, and conscientiously, then we have grown in grace in the same degree that we possess these excellent dispositions. Labour and diligence, discretion and care, watchfulness and experience, are useful instruments to purchase the habits of virtue. The way is at first tedious, long, and difficult; but in the pursuit, the toil abates, and the rugged paths become smooth.

He who would discover his own growth in grace, must examine into the causes and consequences of his own actions: whether he is more intent upon the precepts of religion, and whether they have been profitable to him: if after every interval of extraordinary piety, his next return is more devout, more active, and more affectionate, if his Christian duties are more easy, and continue longer with him in the same expressions, and leave more satisfaction upon his spirits: if his communion is more frequent, and whether he advances nearer to his God: if he has made more firm resolutions, and enter-



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tained more hearty purposes of amendment: if he is more dutiful and obedient; more fervent in his love to God and charity to his neighbour: if his return to the world, and his secular affairs are with a more divided affection. When his piety sometimes, like a wave of the tide, retires only that it may advance further upon the strand: when every new confession, every succeeding communion, every time of his separation for more intense and solemn prayer possess greater portions of his reason and his choice, then he may thank God, who has given him grace to use that which is already bestowed, in the endeavours of his duty. Let him examine, if his passion is converted into friendship; his impetuosity of temper into silence and suppression of language; his fear into caution; his imperiousness of spirit into meekness; his pride into humility; his revenge into justice, and his anger into charity. Is his ambition changed into heroic and virtuous thoughts? Can he emulate the virtues in others, and not envy them, but rather endeavour to imitate and excell them? Is his covetousness lessened into prudence, and mingled with alms?

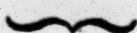
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Has he ceased to despise and scorn his inferiors, and can he respect and obey his superiors? Can he willingly admit of the excellence of others in any talent whatever; and commend them without any disparagement or diminution of their worth? If he is arrived thus far, it is well: but he must yet go further. For although it is a great happiness to be free from all passion that may be sinful; and although part of the felicity of heaven consists in that freedom; yet the increase in grace consists in the remission, in the weakness, and diminution of our passions. He therefore who is incontinent in his desire, outrageous in his anger, insatiable in his thirst of money or pleasure, implacable in his revenge, malice or fear, and immoderate in his joys and sorrows, is not grown in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

IN this scrutiny of our passions then; let every one be exhorted to restrain them. He who has given a present to, or done a kindness for a friend; he who has extended his charity, either in action or in thought, to the universality of Christian benevolence; he who has sustained hunger or thirst for



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righteousness or continence, let him rest satisfied in his conscience that he has thus done; not boast or proclaim it abroad, nor despise another who is not the same, nor reprove him with an upbraiding circumstance. He who voluntarily acknowledges his own faults, and endeavours to rid himself of their infection and guilt, is never satisfied but when resting upon the banks of Sion, at the gates of the Temple, or in the courts of the Lord's House. He then never ceases to be conversant in acts of piety and charity, never pleased but when exercised in virtue and religion. Then he knows the state of his soul, and the danger of his peace; he objects not to be humbled in the opinion of men, that he may be exalted in the sight of God. Evident it is, that he can be neither wise nor good, who had rather conceal his sin, than be thought a repenting sinner; who had rather keep his crime, than blast his reputation, or even hazard the loss of his good name; rather be without the favour of God, than the good opinion of his neighbour.

This consideration, although of great importance, is much neglected. Many  
there

there are, who will neither confess their fault, nor endure reproof; who turn charity into bitterness, and reproof into contumely and scorn. The case was the same with the children of Israel, who stoned, sawed asunder, cast into dungeons, and killed the Prophets of the Lord; thus declining into the deplorable condition of Babylon, *\*we healed her, say the Prophets, but she would not be cured*: but a terrible denunciation follows, *for sake her, and let us go every one into his own country; for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies*: thus to remain against the day of vengeance and retribution, when God will render to every man according to his works.

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THAT man possesses both a tender conscience and a reformed mind, when he is sensible of every change; when every idle word is troublesome to him; when a wandering thought teaches him to be circumspect; when too free an interval of pleasure is terminated with a severe recollection and a holy prayer; lest, as Job said

\* Jeremiah li. 9.



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of his sons, he should have committed folly in his mirth. Every one who is grown in grace and the knowledge of Christ will not only refrain from evil, but from all appearance of evil; because he dreads a relapse with a fear as great as are his hopes of heaven: he knows that the entertainment of small sins dispose him to the commission of greater; they unravel and untwist his holy purposes, and pious resolutions; they begin in infirmity, proceed in folly, and end in death.

HE that is well-grown in grace, pursues piety without the mixture or allay of collateral designs; he hates sin merely for the love he bears to virtue. Thus does he act in private, as he would in public; if he prays in his retirements, in his chamber, and closet, where none but an All-seeing Eye can behold him, as well as in the public places of devotion in the sight and company of men: if he gives his alms in secret, rather than in open day; nor lets his right hand know what his left hand does: if he takes more pleasure in the just satisfaction and discharge of his conscience, than in the security of his reputation: if he rather pursue

purſue innocence than ſeek an excuſe: if he deſires to pleaſe God rather than men, and endeavours to preſerve his favour though he loſe the favour of the world: if he is juſt and conſcientious to his inferi-  
ors, and to the poor, as to his ſuperiors and the higheſt of princes. If when he is ſecure from the eye of the world, from witneſſes and accuſers, and not obnoxious to the notices of the law, he thinks himſelf obliged by his conſcience to act juſtly, and to walk uprightly; then are his ſervices and intentions of virtue right; then is he paſt the twilight of his converſion, and walks in the ſight of God as become men, and not babes in Chriſt Jeſus.

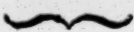
*\*Bleſſed, ſays our Saviour, are thoſe ſervants, whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing. Let it then be our joy, like David,† to go into the houſe of the Lord; he pronounced thoſe to be bleſſed that dwell there. Dwelling implies continual reſidence. Our children then muſt be there, our ſervants there, our hearts and affections there, that we may rather be found*

\* Luke xii. 37.

† Pſalm lxxxiv. 4.



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in the house of prayer, than in the den of thieves.

If the best of men will compare themselves with those servants of God, who are mentioned in scripture for their imitation; chastised, or amended as they may be, how short will they arrive of Moses for meekness; of the prophet David and Nehemiah in their zeal for the house and worship of God. How much does the patience of Job, exceed them? All their prayers and alms will weigh as dust in the balance, when compared with those of Cornelius. This comparison will excite their desires of good, will urge them to add one virtue to another, that they may increase those talents which are already allotted them. How does the ambitious man labour to attain more honours; the voluptuary, to pursue his pleasure; the covetous, to augment his wealth! with what vigour does the sensualist grasp at the things of the world, which are vain and visionary! and why should not Christians, who are somewhat illuminated with the word of God, use the same care and diligence for the preservation of their souls, which may be  
permanent

permanent and endless? there is no commodity so profitable, no dignity so honourable, no felicity so delightful, as to be fruitful in good works.

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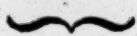
LET us therefore endeavour to improve that talent God has lent us, and to add to that grace which he bountifully bestows on us. Let us reflect how much time we allow, to God and to our souls, every day, every month, and every year: and it will not easily be answered, that all our days and years are short enough to attend perishing things, and be swallowed up in avaritious and vain attentions: that we have not thought of our religion, with a zeal so great as is our revenge, or as is the hunger of one meal. And as the Oracle told the Circæans, that they would not be happy without waging perpetual war; so unless we incessantly fight against our vices, we must not expect our end to be everlasting life.

THAT we may therefore prove good proficients in the doctrine of Christ;  
that



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that we may attain to perfection; that we may purchase a crown of life, visit the mansions of glory, and be seated in the paradise of God, *let us grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.*

SERMON

## SERMON II.

On the IMPORTANCE of a RELIGIOUS  
BEHAVIOUR.

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I JOHN III. 13.

*Every man that hath his hope in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure.—*

THE glory, which God, from the inexhaustible fountain of his mercy, bestows on those who obey him, is wonderful and excellent, both in present possession and future expectation. They have much to encourage them in the way ; they have more in hope, to render them perfectly happy in the end : many instances of his divine love and expressions of his paternal

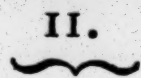
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paternal kindness, with an exceeding weight of future glory.

HOPE, in general, is one of the principal passions of the sensitive appetite: which, according to the schoolmen, are four. They are thus distinguished by the present approach or future expectation of some good or evil; for as joy consists in some present good, and sadness in some present evil, so hope depends on a future good, and fear tends to some future evil. The object of this hope is not in worldly enjoyments; crowns, kingdoms, temporal riches, or honour: but heavenly bliss and everlasting glory. The root from whence this hope springs, is not from any obedience or good works that we do, or possibly may perform; but from faith in the mediator: who, because he procures us justification,\* produces in us the hope of the glory of God.

THIS hope may be more fully discovered by illustrating the foundations on which those build it, who truly enjoy it. They

\* Romans v. 1.—1 Peter i. 21.

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labour to establish it on Jesus Christ; on the mercies, and on the word and promises of God. The believer grounds his hope of heaven upon that elect and precious foundation which he has laid in Zion; who is so firm a basis, so impregnable a fortress, and so strong a pillar of the hope of his people, that the Apostle expressly calls him, *\*our hope*. It is the powerful virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, which is able to sustain and support their hearts in the hope of their eternal inheritance. Who then is he that enjoys this hope? Is it not every one who expects a conformity to our Saviour in heavenly glory, and whose expectation springs from the faith of Christ? He who is ready always† to give an answer concerning the reason of this hope, alledging for his reason, his faith. By which means, he flies for refuge and sanctuary to that hope which is set before him in the gospel.

He who has this hope in Christ and his mediation, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure. This act of purification,

\* 1 Corinthians iii. 11.—† Timothy i. 1. † 1 Peter iii. 13.



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as it extends to every individual over the whole earth, so does it reach the whole of every individual man. The body must be exercised in outward acts of purity, as well as the heart in its inward thoughts; must be free from the corruptions of sin both in action and desire. And although sin sometimes appears lovely and beautiful in the eyes of the wicked, yet, in the sight and judgment of the living and omniscient God, \*sin is the pollution, and holiness is the beauty of the nature of man; and that purification which God requires. †*Without me*, says Christ, *ye can do nothing*; but through the power which is administered to us in him, we can do all things belonging to salvation; we can labour effectually in the spiritual purification of ourselves. ‡*By the grace of God*, says St. Paul, *I am what I am*; and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Thus it appears, that the apostle had no power for the work of God, but what he received from the grace of God; and thus it also appears, that that power which he

\* Psalm xiv. 3.—xxix. 2.

† John xv. 5.

‡ 1 Corinthians xv. 10.

received for this work from God's grace, had been in vain, had he not in that power laboured in the work of God.

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*\*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall continue in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and continue in his love.*

†*Let the same mind be in you as was in Christ Jesus.* His disciples may therefore, for his comfort, encouragement, and direction in the paths of holiness, propose some of God's eminent servants for his own imitation; but no longer than they are conformed to our Saviour, that perfect pattern of all excellence: he may follow others, but only as they are followers of Christ. His purity was sincere, not in outward shew and appearance only, before the eyes of men; but in inward truth and integrity before the eyes of the living God. ‡*This is my beloved Son, says he, in whom I am well pleased.* His purity was without blemish, and without guile, passing through the whole man, imprinting in his heart the law of God. It was in his lips, pouring out such grace, that all who heard him won-

\* John xiii. 10.

† Philippians ii. 5.

‡ Matthew v. 17.

dered



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dered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. It was in his outward actions so conspicuous, that he dared to challenge his most invidious observers to tell him of any sin; \**which of you convinceth me of sin*. It worked †a general renunciation of evil, ‡and an implicit submission to every duty enjoined him by his Father's will.

WHOEVER then enjoys a firm hope of being like Christ in heaven, labours to be like him on earth; and he who has a hope of conformity to Christ in the glory of blessedness, endeavours to be first conformed to him in the purity and beauty of holiness, and thus purifieth himself as he is pure. They who shall shine like the sun in the firmament of heavenly glory, must first shine like lights in the world, in the truth of spiritual beauty. The blessing of seeing God is only promised to those who are pure in heart. He who will enjoy the society of saints and angels, must endeavour to be as pure as them in his nature; his mind must be as free from the impurities of flesh and spirit, as the upper regions of the air

\* John viii. 46.

† 1 Peter ii. 22.

‡ John viii. 29.

from earthly and gross vapours. And as with the Romans, the Temple of Honour was so situated, that there could be no approach to it without passing through the Temple of Virtue; so it is ordained that holiness and purity shall be the way to lead us to Heaven and happiness: that having clean hands and a pure heart, we may *\*ascend into the hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy place.* † St. Peter, in the decision of that dispute which arose concerning the circumcision of the Gentiles that believed, asserted that God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, purifying their hearts by faith. Our Saviour cannot be divided; but if we receive him as righteousness to be saved by him, we must also receive him as sanctification to be cleansed through him; which is so necessary a qualification and moral instrument, that without it we cannot be justified; without it his righteousness will not be imputed to us. His mercy, displayed in so many instances, ought to be strong and efficient motives to incite us to please him; and as he is more bountiful, so should we be more dutiful. The rich and inestimable promises of God,

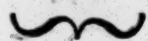
\* Acts xv. 9.

† 1 Corinthians, i. 30.



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are given to his people, as St. Peter says, that they might be made partakers of the divine nature. They are conditional, that we might more endeavour to perform those terms on which they are granted us, and which are inherited by those who have performed the conditions.

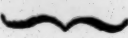
SPIRITUAL purity consists in an utter denial of our own strength, and renunciation of our own ability, that we may more closely depend on Christ for power and assistance. It consists in instant prayer to the living God for deliverance from the dominion of sin: in keeping a watch over ourselves, that no evil suggestion shall purpose or effect what is displeasing in his sight; and in excluding all actions of vanity and hypocrisy from the heart. Whatever habitual sin, custom or course of life, against which there is any rule, precept, threat, or judgment in scripture, we are here called to reject by purifying ourselves: to do that great work of repentance so much talked of, and so little regarded in the world.

AMONG the plain and undoubted truths of divinity, there is scarce any, at the first glance,

glance, more unaccountable to human reason, than that of the first transgressor. The circumstances are so puzzling and intricate, and the understanding is so obscured in the contemplation of it, that the fall of man seems a mystery not much inferior to that of his restoration. It is strange, we may think, that sin should enter, and overspread the world by an upright nature. Our first parents were endowed with faculties that were sound and serviceable; their reason was quick and apprehensive; they were not clogged with a body of sin; their will was obedient to the dictates of right reason, and their passions regulated and subject to the choice and resolution of their will. There was no natural reluctance to render obedience difficult, nor consequently was it impossible for them to abstain from the forbidden fruit, or to have continued in the fruition of that happiness in which God had placed them. That they should forsake their Maker therefore, whom they knew and admired, to hearken to the enticements, one of a woman, the other of a beast, or Satan in the form of it, might be supposed a circumstance of the greatest improbability. As they were embodied in a



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fleshly tabernacle, there was a proportion between the tree and them. It was fit to gratify the eyes and please the palate\*: and not being essentially like their Creator, and so irreversibly holy, their internal purity was such as admitted a possibility of having sensual and vicious desires; though not springing from their own heart, yet excited by external suggestions; nor were their souls so perfect as necessarily to resist them. The issue of which was, that as things of the like nature desire union, so their terrestrial part inclined them to what was earthy, and subjected them to death, as the punishment of a worldly mind: as if the dust of Adam, like that of other creatures, had a desire and tendency to the dust from whence he was taken.

IT is the exercise of the soul to suppress whatever evil our inclinations have occasioned. The work of man is to encounter himself, and to vindicate his capacities to the glory of his Creator. As God is the Lord of the whole man, so it is our homage to give him a whole burnt-offering; not

\* Genesis iii. 6.

only to present him with a desiring spirit, but also with the better sacrifice of a body as pure and spotless.

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\*ST. PAUL having demonstrated that the righteousness which leads men to eternal life, is by faith in Christ, proceeds to apply what he had asserted, and then shews that obedience to the gospel is the perfection of the law, and that the contents of the law are most eminently displayed in the gospel. For instance, †the law required sacrifice and offerings of a carnal substance; but the gospel requires a more excellent, because a more spiritual service and sacrifice. We must not delay till God extorts that from us which belongs to him. What glory is it to give that which we cannot withhold? What virtue conceive we in that holiness which we are constrained to perform? And what excellence is it then only to be uncorrupt, when we can no longer either pollute ourselves, or delight in sin? It is easy to suppose that to be no virtue in us, which we are to impute only to some impossibility or indisposition. But virtue im-

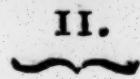
\* Romans xii. —.

† Hebrews ix. 1.



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plies choice and liberty; and the test of our sanctity is from a principle of obedience to do good, when we may do evil. To offer by constraint, is to make that our present, which the person we would appease, makes his prey, and argues no more submission, than resigning our station to him whom we are not able to resist. Our grace indeed is the gift of God, and he rewards his own works in us: we do but preserve for him, what he is pleased to vindicate to himself. But Christ convinces us, not by violence, but by gracious intreaties and assistances. Thus there is a harmony and concurrence in our wills, and the soul makes the body an acceptable sacrifice.

THERE is in the world a twofold mistake, of which in extremes the very same persons are guilty. The first consists in presenting the body without the soul; whose religion, being only animal, must be empty and fruitless. How many idle and formal professors of the gospel are there, who present their God with the empty casks, who are as founding brass and as tinkling cymbals! who appear before God, and do no more; who come to the

the ordinance, and thus depart ; who, even in their devotion visit no other temple but that made with hands ; who only enter the society of christians to observe their practice, as if they thought it requisite for the solemnity and triumph of religion, that whilst some are exercising their duty, others should be looking on !

THE other mistake consists in presenting the soul without the body. How many surround the altar of God, when they have not even thought of washing their hands in innocency. They, perhaps, rest on a false excuse which St. Paul urges, *\*Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* It is true indeed, sin which is inborn, is the occasion of our miscarriages ; but sin is to be restrained and mortified. How many have imbrued their hands in the blood of their fellow-creatures, who yet believed that their consciences were sprinkled with the blood of their Redeemer ! How many are there vicious, intemperate, and profane ! How many sons of Belial that drink down iniquity ! But

*\* Romans vii. 20.*



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reason and religion both confess their condemnation to be just, that it slumbers not. Our members are members of Christ, and our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost.

As to those who are under the former mistake, we may suspect their profession to be a veil of atheism; and the latter, that they make a mockery of religion. But it were well for them to give God a due sacrifice to his love, before they fall a just sacrifice to his displeasure.

To whom should we present our bodies but to the Creator of them? to whom but to him that is their preserver? to whom, but to him that is their Saviour and glorifier? Should we give our bodies to the world, we owe neither our shape nor substance to it, but to him that made us and all things from nothing. In such a case, in the pursuit of such a devotion, it would be better for us never to have been born,—rather than defile the temples of our bodies, better that *a millstone were hanged about our necks, and we were cast into the sea.* Our bodies are the property of God, by a donation from himself,

himself, and therefore they ought to be such by a dedication to him. To whom should we give our bodies but to him who is able to destroy them; and who is faithful not to let them perish, but to raise them up at the last day.

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THE orders for the sacrifices, and circumstances attending them, were instituted by positive laws; and laws we have for glorifying God in our bodies. Our sacrifice must be \*sound and quick; not blind, not lame, not feeble; and no oblation is acceptable, but what is willingly and freely offered; quickened and informed through faith and a virtuous mind, it must not be defiled with sin or indulged with pleasures. It must be a continual and holy sacrifice. †The sacrifice of the Jews have now an end, but the sacrifice of christians must be without end. ‡We must always give thanks, and always pray. The fire on the altar must never go out, our sacrifice never die; for though by continuance of life we decay and waste, yet by continuance in well doing, we are renewed and strengthened.

\* Malachi i. 8.    † Ephesians v. 20.    ‡ Ephesians vi. 18.



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As God is the Lord who fashioned our substance yet being imperfect, what is more reasonable than that our bodies should be employed in worshipping and serving him that made them? We should be sorry that any one, for whom, by right of parentage, we are interested; any one that we have redeemed, raised, or adopted into our favour, should ungratefully deny us that which himself owes to our benevolence. But much more reasonable is it that God should be offended when we refuse to give him our bodies a living sacrifice; as we are much more bound to him than we can be to one another. To him we owe our life, our very being. For where obligations are greater, observance is much more reasonable, and neglect or contempt more insufferable.

ST. PAUL enforces his argument to this purpose by the most endearing address; \*he entreats them as brethren; which ingenuity cannot resist in any case that is lawful, just, and honourable. It is strange to find those whom such importunities cannot per-

\* Romans xii. 1.

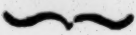
suade, but who are angry when entreated to be reconciled to God, and to avoid the wrath to come. This is obstinacy indeed, in those who cannot be prevailed upon to the performance of a reasonable service; who are displeased with others in administering comfort; offended with those who desire their welfare: and in such an address of humility and petition, as in the same bond of fraternity, represents them like such as beg compassion whilst they shew it.

THERE is nothing more delights us, than that all the world should be kind; rejoice in our prosperity and success, and be sorry in our heaviness, dejected in our adversity. We desire all should congratulate and condole with us; but it were well if that desire were as equitable as it is earnest among ourselves. Thus we may infer the necessity of outward sanctification in reference to true religion, and the insufficiency of mental religion.

WHAT if we have some good desires and purposes in our minds, it is no argument of regeneration. We cannot from hence  
conclude



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conclude, that our souls are inspired with an inherent vigour, that they are endued with much strength. The efficacy of a supernatural impression must be lasting and powerful, that it may purify the mind. That force which is communicated from above, must incorporate with our native abilities ; it must be habituated in our inward man ; or else, leaving us as it found us with respect to sin, it leaves us worse in in respect of guilt and penalty.

WHAT acceptable service can there be in a mere thought? Only to think and meditate, is to mean, but never to do well. Because we have good motions and pious desires within, does it therefore follow that our conversation is in heaven? The blessed angels, whose life we should imitate to the utmost of our capacities, are not only employed in the contemplation of their Creator, but, as the Scripture informs us, in the external execution of his commands : from whence we may perceive the insufficiency of that work upon the soul, which does not renew and quicken the body ; which is made to be an instrument of righteousness, and the receptacle of a holy mind. It is as  
useless

useless and unprofitable as a spring, which, although it retain something of a virtue and conamen, yet gives no motion to the wheels of the engine.

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WHERE good works are, we may conclude there is a virtuous heart, supposing them to be without partiality, as experience, and without hypocrisy, as charity binds us to believe. \**Shew me thy faith, without thy works*, says St. James, *and I will shew thee my faith by my works*. †*Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* No, says our Saviour, *a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit*. Many are inclined to shape their religion according to their imaginations: with some, a pure mind is so over-valued, that they neglect the power of such a mind. With others, morality is so embellished, as if clean and upright hearts were not to be regarded. For those who admire the external acts of virtue, it concerns them to look to the hidden part of man, knowing the perfection of virtue cannot otherwise be obtained. For those who extol the actions of the mind, it concerns

\* James ii. 18.

† Matthew vii. 16.

them



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them to consider that good works may be produced by virtue of holy thoughts. Then may they say, that God is in them of a truth ; that they may bring forth fruits unto holiness ; or what is the same, present their bodies an acceptable sacrifice to God. They are the workmanship, and consequently the right of their great Creator. Though God is said in a peculiar manner to form the spirit of man with him, it is because there is no second cause employed in the production of it. If he be the Lord of the greater, he is also of the lesser world ; and if it be a sacrilege to deny him the soul, what must it be to withhold the body ? In all human affairs, if there be a right to that which is more excellent, to deny that which is inferior is much more injurious, because the obligation to offer it is greater. If our bodies are not presented to God, he cannot be said to be the sovereign of our hearts ; and how necessary this is to the exercise of religion in general, need not be urged. But if there be not a concurrence in the whole man, we are as much divided from God, as in ourselves. With respect to ourselves, the body is liable to rewards and punishments. God can make our bo-

dies glorious, and the bodies of his saints he will glorify; and what bodily felicity is there like that of the resurrection? If it be a reasonable service to labour for some little ease and accommodation of the body here, how much rather for the glorious resurrection of it hereafter! We think it an act becoming rational creatures, to endeavour, by all possible means, to secure our bodies from hardship, from any violent pain, from any threatened malady; and is it not more rational to strive to escape the pains of eternity? Were it well considered, sensuality itself might urge to the mortification of sin, and the care of our bodies might teach us to live above them. Those, therefore, who are devoted to sinful delusions in themselves of what kind soever, and are estranged from a holy labour to be holy, are not, whatever they may pretend, partakers of that hope, which the Apostle affirms, *purifieth as Christ is pure.* \**Let the wicked then forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

\* Isaiah lv. 7.

LET



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II.  


LET it incite those who profess the gospel, and who hope for heaven through the satisfaction of Christ, to an earnest endeavour for the attainment of spiritual purity. Great, certainly, is the reproach to which the gospel is exposed through the disproportionate courses and conversation of its professors; who ought to learn, that they only deceive themselves in the pretence of the hope of the gospel, whilst they shew not the spiritual virtue of their hope in practising that holiness which becomes the gospel. Let them consider the religion they profess, and let it oblige them to be both holy and pure: not so vain as to forfeit their hopes of glory on such slight and sordid terms, as the gratification of their desires; nor purchase their temporal satisfaction at so great a loss; nor prefer the empty pleasures of sin, before the endless and inestimable joys of the kingdom of glory. As our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, shall we defile that which God has consecrated to his own use and service? What he has separated, cleansed, and garnished for the reception of himself, and the inhabitation of his holy spirit? Let us rather have an eye to the eminent example

ample of our Saviour, and have frequent reference to him ; and as he lived innocent and simple, prudent and wise, holy and spotless, unreprieved and unsuspected, so let us transcribe his copy ; for it was one principal end of his coming into the world, that he might give us an example of living by the manners of his own life : let his life then be the mirror of our own, that being like him here in spiritual purity, we may also be like him in heavenly glory.

SERM.

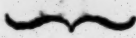
II.

BUT it is a lamentable consideration, that the neglect of respect, obedience, and faithfulness to God ; of honesty, justice, and charity to men : that the practice of immorality and profaneness in citizens ; that the omission of exemplary virtue in parents ; and of submissive reverence in children ; that the breach of fidelity and chastity, the want of integrity and piety, are become so popular and so alarming, \*that the government of the kingdom has thought it proper to press the inferior magistrates to check so rapid and increasing an evil, and to punish those who violate

\* After reading the King's proclamation against vice, &c.



SERM.

II.  


the laws either of God or man, by a vigorous execution of justice. If this attempt prove to us, that persons in authority are more religiously inclined, and more industrious in their office, what an influence will it have on the manners of the people ! Vice will not then triumphantly and audaciously hold up its head ; our ears will not be assailed, nor our feelings insulted by shameful oaths and wanton execrations. The peaceable man may hope to pass through life in the tranquil enjoyment of his innocence and ease, without any dread of the mischievous calumniator, or abandoned profligate. The woman of virtue need not fear the violation of her chastity ; nor will the child of affliction be seduced by the intemperate into scenes of misery, producing irremediable pain both of body and mind. Degenerate nobility will be elevated into persons of real honour, and reclaimed to the laws of civility ; while the meaner ranks of life will be reconciled to live like men. What a happy prospect of affairs is presented to our view from the reflection on a general reformation of manners. And as it is the timely injunction of the first magistrate of the realm, let every one in  
subor-

subordination to his authority, as delegates for the due execution of truth and justice, urgently attend to so necessary a duty. Let every private person be excited to advance this blessed work, by correcting the irregularities of his own life, and by discouraging them in others. Let every parent vigilantly inspect, and cautiously guide, the conduct of his children; and every master impartially scrutinize the character of his servants. This will anticipate the duty of the magistrate, is an act of loyalty to the king, and obedience to God; and will rather prove us to be good subjects, than all the oaths and associations whatever. \*Virtue and religion establish the throne, says Solomon, and recommend to God both the prince and the people.

\* Proverbs xvi. 12.



## SERMON III.

On the Use of MOURNING.

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MATTHEW V. 4.

*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

SERM.  
III.

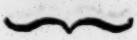
THESE words are the second beatitude, intended as a qualification to form the true christian. It is one of those necessary graces to which the word *blessed* is prefixed, and which was delivered by our Saviour in his first and most excellent sermon upon the Mount.

THIS sermon contains an epitome of the christian religion, as it is an abstract and system of christian philosophy, and as it  
exalts

exalts those who will be the disciples of Christ above all others, that the practice and study of piety and virtue might flourish and abound. At the time, therefore, he delivered this discourse, he left the untaught and ignorant multitude below, as though they were altogether incapable of receiving such doctrines, and unable to comprehend precepts of so sublime and elevated a nature. He ascended the Mount of Olives, accompanied only by disciples; to dispense them to select and approved auditors, to those who had made some progress in christian knowledge under his banner. There they were to be taught and disciplined by him, to learn those things which the eye of flesh cannot discover, and to find truth in what was before veiled in paradox; to discern riches in poverty, glory in contempt, and pleasure in misery; to distinguish honour even in disgrace, joy in sorrow, and comfort in mourning; to disdain not the form of poverty, to be enamoured with the aspect of grief, and the face of mourning. They are taught in the school of Christ to be poor in spirit, to be meek, and to be lowly; to avoid the blamishment of pleasure, to reject the allure-



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III.  


ments of beauty, to abandon the shadowy felicities of this life, and to enter the house of mourning for real and endless delight, substantial beauty, and eternal blessedness. They are not to be offended because he came to them in meanness and penury, in humility and mourning, in a posture so opposite to their hopes, and so contrary to their expectation, while they looked for a great and glorious Messiah, a Prince and Conqueror, who should restore the kingdom to Israel. The true disciples of Christ must be unanimous in affection and obedience to him, to learn what is the real nature of his kingdom, and that it is not of this world. They must as willingly receive him in disgrace, in poverty, and affliction, as in honours, riches, and pleasures; to mourn and suffer, as well as to reign and triumph with him. He filled their hearts with more abundant grace, that they may be capable of receiving his discipline, however rigorous, and to comprehend his doctrine, however novel. He opened the eyes of their understanding, that they may see what a star there is fixed even in this cloud, what consolation in this mourning.

By

By mourning, in the text, is meant not a ceremonial piety, which is usually performed for our deceased friends, but a true contrition arising from a proper consideration of our wants, and a confident sense of our sins.

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III.

To mourn for our more immediate wants, is to mourn for the want of original purity, and primæval righteousness, in which we were created; and which, if we could have retained, would have effectually drawn towards us the favour of God. To mourn also for the want of sufficient strength and ability to perform that duty we owe to God; our bountiful Creator and Preserver. The weakness and frailties of our nature, and our want of strength and sufficiency, is so great, that our blessed Saviour, exhorting his very disciples to watch against temptations, laments it even in them, *\*the spirit, indeed, says he, is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

By mourning may be here meant, to be affected with sorrow of heart for our sins;

\* Matthew xxvi. 41.



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for original sin; for the depravity and propensity of our corrupt nature to evil; for that inordinate disposition, which is caused by the dissolution of that harmony in which original righteousness consisted; for that defection or decay of our nature, which the prophet David expresses, the *\*shaping in iniquity*. To mourn more particularly for sin, is to be deeply affected with a hearty sorrow for the evil actions and habits of our lives, as they are the causes of a more remote separation of the soul from the favour of God.

THAT we are thus daily to mourn, and supplicate a pardon for our weakness and imperfections, is evident from that most absolute and perfect form of prayer taught us by our blessed Saviour; in which, first his own chosen disciples, who (if any) surely were regenerate, and then christians of every denomination are taught to pray for the daily forgiveness of the trespasses of their souls, as well as for the supply of their bodily necessities. *Give us, and forgive us*, is but one conjunct petition, on ac-

\* Psalm li. 5.

count of our continual failings in soul, as well as the continual wants of the body.

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THERE can be no forgiveness but to the penitent, and no man can be penitent, who does not mourn for his daily sins of infirmities and daily transgressions of life. We are not only to mourn for sin in ourselves, but also for the sins of others; as \*Ezra mourned for the wickedness of his people; as our Saviour also, when he wept over Jerusalem, because of their obdurate and impenitent hearts; and as David, who was afflicted, because the law of God was violated.

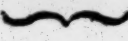
MOURNING on a worldly account, is when we are so affected with temporal losses or afflictions, as to suppose ourselves in the utmost extremity of misery and ruin. When the Danites had carried away the images of Micah, †*they have carried away my gods*, said he, *and what have I more?* This is that sorrow which St. Paul brands with infamy, and, because it is worldly and sensual, accounts it no better than death.

\* Ezra x. 6.

† Judges xviii. 24.



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To mourn under affliction, or for any valuable loss, is such a mourning as has always sufficient patience to tolerate, and sufficient hope to support it. For, though to follow Christ does not exempt us from suffering, but rather engages us to endure more and greater injuries than other men; yet, through the favour of God, it renders all our trials profitable and advantageous: our sorrow and afflictions are temporal and momentary, but our joy and comfort spiritual and eternal. Our blessed Saviour assured his disciples of this truth, when they had taken his gracious yoke upon their necks, and when they were going forth to preach the gospel, and had engaged to undergo all temporal hazards for the sake of it; on the contrary, their persecutors, who now gloried in the misery they inflicted, should mourn, and have neither present patience to support, nor future consolation to alleviate them.

To mourn, as denoting a temporal affliction, is to mourn also for the afflicted state of the church of God; when Jerusalem is low on the ground, to hang up our harps, and sit down and weep; which is a lively repre-

representation of faith, as appears from the example of Moses, quoted by St. Paul, who, when arrived at maturity, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, rather chusing to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of the accounted people of God greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompence of the reward, his eye was turned on immortality. Nehemiah, though in a prosperous condition, holding the office of butler to the king, at that time a place of great credit and confidence, when he heard of the destruction of Jerusalem, mourned because the Temple of God was involved in the calamity. Uriah refused to enter his house, or take his rest, when the Ark of the Lord was in danger. And it was no satisfaction to the wife of Phineas to be told she had borne a son, when the glory was departed from Israel, when the Ark of God was taken.

*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that thus mourn for their wants and sins, for they shall*



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shall be reconciled to God, and assured of his favour, which effectually restores all the losses, supplies all the wants, and repairs all the defects of the mourning soul. Though we may not have lived with that piety, justice, and charity, which are commanded in the gospel, yet if there be in us any sense of our misconduct, any apprehension of our sins, we are at no great distance from contrition; through the influence of which we shall be accepted and comforted. We are thus assured of that present felicity which results from a due application of this blessed disposition; for there is no condition of soul more wretched than that of the relentless sinner. We shall then also be assured of future felicity: Christ, who will hereafter give, now promises comfort to such mourners; to reap in joy peculiarly belongs to those who sow in tears. This assurance arises also from the very nature of comfort and refreshment, by which the joys of heaven are expressed, and of which none can partake but the sad and solitary mourner. Nor indeed is Heaven, the vision of God, and the revelation of his favour, a blessing so much to be enjoyed, or so complete, as when it wipes away

away all tears from their eyes, *who went mourning all the day long.* The star of comfort appears more bright and glorious in a cloud of sorrow, consolation more comfortable when it proceeds from, and is produced by mourning.

SERM.

III.

PLEASURE and grief have various aspects and contrary effects. Pleasure smiles, when grief weeps; but there is bitterness in those smiles, and joy in those tears: in the midst of that laughter the heart is sorrowful, but in mourning there is comfort and blessedness. Thus our Saviour, uniting, as in the text, blessing and mourning, represents the wretchedness of pleasure. Pleasure is what we naturally seek, even from our tender years; and all our life we incline to it, as a stone to its centre. It has so seduced the world with its charms and allurements, that nothing seems amiable without it; without it the world would have no endearments to soothe us. We consume our days in mirth and delight, and, as though nature had not afforded us sufficient variety, we have studied to increase it by art. We have mingled it with our labour, and rendered all our toil as easy as possible; we have mingled



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mingled it with our sorrow, and are ready to receive it even into a broken heart; and we have mingled it with our religion, which is attempered to the senses, and become pliable and conformable to the suggestions of the fancy. Thus we pass from sensual to spiritual delight, from a theatre of pleasure, into a receptacle of joy.

THERE is a kind of warlike opposition between the body and the soul; when the body prevails, the soul is weak; for from whence do all our turbulent affections spring? from whence those tumults which disturb and agitate the senses? are they not the natural issues of our desire? A wise man accounted it a great benefit of nature, that no pleasure was of long continuance, that we might not be too long without the use of our reason, because the understanding is subservient to the senses. Pleasure befools the wise, as it did Solomon; perverts the just, as it did David; weakens the strong, as it did Samson. At a feast Assyria drew her last breath; by gluttony, Babylon was betrayed, and by riot Nineveh. Death itself would not have such mighty strength, but it borrows aid and support from

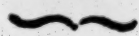
from sensuality and pleasure, which destroys us, not with the sword or weapons of war, but with violets and roses, colours and tastes, with smiles and flattery. Pleasure bows the covetous, who meditates only on his wealth; it exalts the head of the proud man, for he is his own paradise, and walks in the contemplation of himself, as in the palace he has built; it whets the sword of the revenger, for he delights in blood; it grinds the teeth of the oppressor, for the poor are his bread.

WHY then should we expect comfort from those whose very comforts are mortal, more mortal than mortality itself; which please with injuring, and injure with pleasing, and end in desolation and mourning. All sensual delight, even as it rises, is in its setting; and casts behind a long shadow, which is nothing but grief: and as the sun sets, the shadows increase; so the least pleasure when it declines, portends a sorrow far greater and larger than itself. But mourning produces very different and salutary effects; it is a friend to virtue, the guardian of our innocence, and an angel to guide us into the ways of peace and happiness.



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III.



ness. The rod of God is a rod of iron to bruise us to pieces, till we attend to it, and obey it; but when we understand its language and discipline, when we see the plague of the heart in the distemper of the body, when we discover that there are greater evils than those we mourn, then we divert our grief to those objects of more worth and advantage; then the rod of God is not a rod to bruise us, but a staff to support and comfort us. The experience of every man will teach him, that when he feels not the wrath of God in the outward calamities which produce this mourning, he is provoked to the commission of sin, from the unrestrained suggestion of the mind, as well as from external temptation to pleasure. In mirth and prosperity how often is God forgotten! how little do we regard our own wants and infirmities! As cheerfulness is the companion of health, and comeliness the ornament of youth, so hope and joy exist only in virtuous minds. \*A wise heathen has told us, that we are never well but in sickness. Who when languishing under the pressure of disease, or in

\* Cicero.

the bitterness of pain can forget his duty to God, and his charity to man? Who can then attend to his ambitious and covetous desires; can then think of his merriment and pleasure? Who is not then deaf to detraction and calumny, and awake to justice and benevolence? Does he not then betake himself to prayer, and express his hopes of heaven and immortality in pious ejaculations and fervent supplications? Thus is the pattern of a perfect christian, more naturally to be found, and more amiably exhibited on the bed of sickness. Therefore, says the Heathen, let us be truly and really, when we are well, the same as we promise when we are sick. A lesson not very distantly allied to that great commandment, which comprehends in it all the law and the prophets.

SERM.

III.

MOURNING works so powerfully upon the understanding, that not only the seeds of moral conversation, but the seeds also of knowledge which are gathered from Scripture, and improved by instruction and practice, are visible and available; and which are never so obscured as when pleasures have taken possession of the soul.

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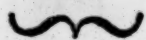
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SERM.

III.



The mind is then dazzled and amazed with intervenient objects, and being blinded by the God of the world, it indeed sees truth, but only through the vanities of the world, which, as coloured glasses, present the objects like themselves. In mirth and jollity how little does a man see of himself! At what a distance does he view his sins! All things appear as upon a stage in masks, for vice then wears the countenance of virtue; envy is accounted emulation, covetousness is prudence, prodigality is bounty, faction is faith, and the gospel liberty. Who, in this case, will tell himself the truth, and impartially censure his own actions? But when the hand of justice, or rather of mercy, shall lead him into the house of mourning; when calamity or sickness shall cut off his hopes of enjoying those pleasing objects which he had long cherished, then the understanding has more liberty to retire into itself, then it begins to awake, as from oblivious slumber, to enjoy a kind of heavenly serenity. The seeds of goodness, thus free from the allurements of pleasure, recover life and strength, and branch out into those apprehensions which urge him to loath the evil which so lately delighted him.

Sin

Sin then appears in its proper shape and original colour; envy is murder; covetousness is idolatry; prodigality is folly; the gospel is not a sanctuary for libertines, but for mourners.

SERM.

III.

THE will of man, which though free, is a perverse and froward faculty; and though it cannot be compelled to determine, it may be wrought on by promises and threats. To this end, are all the exhortations, intreaties, and menaces in the gospel. If pleasure be powerful now to sway us to forbidden objects, adversity may be as powerful to withdraw us from them. All the blessings and curses under the law were aimed at the will, and though prosperity be sometimes persuasive, yet affliction is more eloquent. What we desire in our merriment, in our mourning we reject; for having followed the beguiling delusions of the world, and tasting gall and bitterness in every seeming delight; having found death on the lips of pleasure, and misery in every way it wanders; having fed on husks in a strange country, like the prodigal son, the same will which first seduced



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us, and brought us thither, will change and turn us back again to our Father's house. True christian sorrow is necessary to render us capable of true christian comfort. Such is the fruit of a holy penitence, the happiness of a religious contrition, and the comfort of mourning.

WITH indignation then let us view the world, whose embraces have so long imprisoned us. Let those pleasant trifles that have been thus long admired, excite our scorn and contempt; and exchange those shadows of felicity so eagerly pursued, for more celestial enjoyments, and enduring pleasures. Why should we weary ourselves in vain desires, and why should the indulgence of transitory vanities occupy the thoughts? He who knows both from scripture and experience, the goodness of the Lord, will despise the things of the world, with all their superficial attractions, and gaudy delusions, the emblems of pride and injustice, ingratitude and envy, whose choicest feasts are worse than an Egyptian diet to the manna, and whose largest road of pleasure is but a precipice to that way, whose narrowest path leads

leads to freedom and content. He who has felt that internal satisfaction, which proceeds from the service of his Maker, will sacrifice himself in pious resolutions, and mourn that he was so long a stranger to his law. He who has tasted of the comfort that flows from sorrowing, will grieve that he has been so long absent from the house of mourning. And though we are here as travellers in a wilderness of affliction, in a valley of tears, in a wet and foul way; yet let us be comforted in the assurance, that this wilderness leads us to a heavenly Canaan; the valley of tears to Mount Sion, where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes; and the wet and foul way to the waters of comfort, to a fair and rich city, where there is abundant reward for him that labours, a glorious reward for him that vanquishes, and above all, eternal comfort and blessing for him that mourns.

SERM.

III.





# SERMON IV.

## On PURITY OF HEART.

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MATTHEW V. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

SERM.  
IV.

OUR Saviour, in his 'excellent sermon on the mount, introduces his doctrine with an assurance both of temporal and eternal happiness to those who profess it. Christianity required a double beatitude to allure the attention of the world, because its precepts were of a more divine nature than those delivered to the Jews, and consequently more repugnant to the corrupt inclinations of sensual men. It obliges to the severity

severity of penance and mortification, it requires an internal purity and spiritual perfection. The christian is commanded to be holy, as God is holy. Thus a religion which countermands the practice of the animal world, which removes those easy indulgencies permitted to the Jews, needed something extraordinary to recommend it to mankind. Our Saviour therefore has affixed to the christian profession a promise of future felicity, has assured his disciples of an eternal weight of glory.

SERM.

IV.

THE most important of the Jewish promises were temporal enjoyments, a Canaan flowing with milk and honey; which was a type of heaven so mysterious, that their gross apprehensions could not penetrate the veil which obscured it. They had no clear, no direct title of the heavenly Jerusalem. Their religion was only ceremonial, consisting in those external bodily performances which affected the sense, rather than in those divine and spiritual raptures which purified and elevated the soul. An imperfect temporary reward was consequently a sufficient and suitable recompence for their performances; their religion being external,



SERM.

IV.



it is natural to suppose the promised reward should be the same.

NOT that God, because he did not offer immortality to the Jews, as the condition of their obedience, determined to exclude them from it; but, as temporal blessings were more agreeable to their languid notions of felicity, and a compensation more applicable to their ritual performances, there was no necessity to propose higher inducements, or to promise nobler rewards for their obedience. But, as christianity demanded a more elevated and spiritual piety, a more intrinsic holiness, and stricter conversation, it was requisite, by the highest endearments, to recommend it to the world, and to enforce its precepts with the noblest promises.

It is a moral, not a ritual purity, to which the text directs; it consists not in the nice Judaical avoidance of legal pollutions, as touching a dead body, or a creeping thing, or whatever may be thus considered unclean; but in a right disposition of mind, in a freedom from sin, both of soul and body. Under the gospel, such thoughts  
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of the mind, or actions of the body, which are contrary to a moral or divine law, defile the man : and not an external physical impurity of the body, as under the Jewish dispensation.

SERM.

IV.

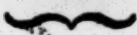


THIS purity of heart may hence be considered, either in opposition to pollution, as we call water pure which is not mudded; or in opposition to mixture, as wine is said to be pure when it is not mixed. In the first sense, it excludes carnality; in the second, hypocrisy.

IF, then, we would be pure in the first sense, virtuous and honourable actions must accompany chastity of life and integrity of manners, equally exempt from the appearance of vanity ; so modest as to raise no just suspicion of levity, or to give to others a reasonable cause of scandal. We must watch our thoughts with perpetual circumspection ; for chastity not only condemns the effect, but prohibits the intentions of impurity. If the mind be free from the seeds of vice, it is impossible the fruit of it should appear. For, how can he kill who dares not be angry? How shall he be adulterous in act, who does not first



SERM.

IV.  


first transgress in his desire? How shall he be perjured who dreads an oath? or defraud, who permits not himself to covet? But if the heart be impure, it vitiates the whole man, so malignant is the influence of corruption, that it poisons all his actions; and if the fountain be infected, where will it produce a wholesome stream?

A just apprehension of sin will purify our thoughts and actions, cleanse our hearts, and regulate our appetites, confine our affections to proper objects, keep our inferior faculties in a just subjection and due obedience to the rational soul, the most noble and principal part of human nature. We should not then either yield to the force of temptation, or indulge every daring and rebellious passion; nor preposterously enslave our reason to our appetite. No effeminate softness would then pamper the taste; nor would every element be searched to gratify the inclination; and we should resolutely deny ourselves those things, which the vigour of our fancy might suggest, or the wantonness of our appetite solicit.

IDLE-

Idleness, which is the pitfall of vice, is no less hostile to this purity. Man is an active creature, and therefore we cannot mean a lazy oscitancy, a supine carelessness, and total cessation from every degree of action, incompatible with human nature; but a remission from regular and necessary employment, when there is no certain pursuit to determine the thoughts, and no fixed employment to direct our actions. How easily does every temptation find admittance in such a mind.

Idleness and luxury are not the only objects from which the mind must be weaned; for there are other degrees of impurity, which are inconsistent with the precept in the text, and must be utterly eradicated from the soul; as hatred and variance, wrath and strife, sedition and heresy; and other vices enumerated \*by St. Paul, among the works of the flesh, in his catalogue to the Galatians.

THEY therefore may well consider, who fondly persuade themselves that they have attained this purity of heart, which has

\* Galatians v. 19, &c.



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IV.  


here the promise of a beatitude, because they are not guilty of any actual criminalities; when at the same time they delight themselves in propagating the mischiefs of dissension in society, and industriously create divisions in every order of the community. This imaginary purity will little avail them; not guided by the prescription of the gospel, but by the emotions of their own fancy.

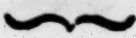
It may be observed, that not every vain desire, and irregular deviation of the appetite, which are frequently occasioned only through human frailty, and the mere infirmities of our nature, will render us impure: for then indeed, no man in this life, however careful and solicitous of himself, could attain such purity of heart. Human nature in this corrupted state is incapable of such eminent perfection. It is the concurrence of the will which constitutes the crime: for though it be not in the power of every one to prevent any sudden emotion of his spirits, he may yet extinguish the spark before the flame be kindled: though he must meet with temptations, yet his compliance is the result of his own inclination.

inclination. However then our spiritual enemies assault us, whether they proceed by soft suggestions to allure, or by a turbulent and rebellious impulse endeavour to compel us to yield them obedience ; yet if we hearken not to the charms of one, nor are hurried away with the violence of the other, but preserve a guard over ourselves, and fortify the barrier of the heart with persevering self-denial ; notwithstanding some irregular desires which the infirmities of mankind impose on all of us, we forfeit not our innocence and chastity, but are, in the first sense, pure in heart.

BUT the injunction of the text obliges us to exclude hypocrisy, and to deal sincerely both with God and man ; with God, in not dividing our attention between him and our private interest ; in not allowing ourselves to commit any sin, whatever celebrity or advantage may arise from it ; professing at the same time a zeal for godliness and honesty. It forbids us to render religion a tool to interest ; to wear the mask of devotion, that we may more successfully compass our secret designs. It permits us not to give alms publicly, that we may obtain



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tain the praise of men ; nor to make long prayers more effectually to devour widows' houses : but requires us in all our religious duties to regard the glory of God ; not admit any corival with him in our hearts, whether it be self-interest or popular applause. \*This is that species of hypocrisy, against which our Saviour denounced so many calamities ; acknowledging his omnipotence and infinite perfection, and, †with Naaman the Syrian, for temporal advantage, bowing in the house of Rimmon. The sin thus condemned, is serving Mammon as well as God.

BUT here it may not be understood, as if it were intended to oppose our religion and our interest to each other ; for our first object is to be sincerely religious ; and ‡our Saviour in exhorting his disciples, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, assured them, that all things necessary to sustain and support them, shall be super-added.

IT is from an interior habit of the mind, that proceed all positive acts of real virtue:

\* Matthew xxiii.

† 2 Kings v. 18.

‡ Matthew vi. 33.

it is an inward sense of goodness that makes us honest and sincere, that prevents fraud in trade, and treachery in friendship. When our actions flow from an undissembled love of virtue itself, are not influenced nor directed by the hopes of worldly advantage, or by the fear of that shame and discredit which always attends detected knavery, then we may both reasonably and confidently rely on the purity of our own hearts. In the common concerns of life, in the transactions of trade, in which no security can be so substantial as mutual confidence, we must neither by wanton subterfuge delude, or by intriguing circumvention impose upon, an unwary brother. This is expressly discouraged by the suffrage of daily experience, as well as forbidden\* by the authority of scripture.

As hypocrisy in friendship is in the highest degree perfidious, it is consequently more inconsistent with this purity of heart. There can be no greater or more evident sign of a bad disposition, than to deal treacherously with a friend; than under

\* 1 Thessalonians iv. 6.—Jeremiah ix. 9.  
Leviticus xix. 11.—Micah vi. 11.



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the venerable mask of friendship to practise deceit. It was a severe reprehension of our Saviour to Judas, when he led the repenting populace against Christ--\* *Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?* Accusest thou the part of a villain under the guise of a friend? The Royal Psalmist advances it as an aggravation of guilt in some of his associates, † that it was his own familiar friend whom he trusted, and who did eat of his bread, that laid great wait for him. He could have forgiven an open enemy that had done him this dishonour, but for so disingenuous and treacherous a brother, he thought the severest imprecation not severe. Thus making a zealous shew of religion, with a view to his own worldly advantage; having a form of godliness, when he was truly destitute of its power. This prevarication is that hypocrisy against which our Saviour declaims; as thus to trifle between God and Mammon is to serve neither. Let us then beware, lest our portion be with such hypocrites, that we be neither false nor unrighteous neigh-

\* Luke xxii. 48.

† Psalm lv. 14.

bours, nor such deceitful persons \*whom God abhors.

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† *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall rise up in his holy place? Even he, says David, that has clean hands and a pure heart; and has not lift up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour; it is he shall receive the blessing of the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

As clearness is necessary to the eye of the body, to render it capable of perception, so is purity to the eye of the mind. A worldly eye is not capable of discerning a pure and spiritual substance; without conformity between the faculty and the object, there can be no perception. Were we indeed to expect a Mahometan Paradise after this life; were all our felicity to be terminated in transitory enjoyments, and sensual pleasure; or had we only the prospect of a temporary Canaan, to have our portion only in this life, it would be proper discretion either to excite our present ap-

\* Psalm v. 6.

† Psalm xxiv. 3.



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petites ; or by frequent antepasts here, prepare for that profuse entertainment hereafter. But as that happiness which we expect is of another nature, which consists in those purer and more refined pleasures of the soul, the result of heavenly enjoyments, and which can never be agreeable to the sensual appetite ; an internal purity is required to qualify us for the fruition of it. Immaterial felicities afford no satisfaction to a worldly mind ; those eyes which have continually beheld vanity, would be dazzled, not delighted, with the beatific vision.

It might be needless to propose arguments for the practice of that duty, which is the advantage of every man to pursue ; because it is little doubted, that a visible interest is the most powerful motive to persuade us to the performance of that which may promote it. It is so much the Diana of the age\*, that with Demetrius and his companions, we despise the worship of the true God to maintain the magnificence of that idol, from which we can secure either

\* Acts xix.

honour or profit to ourselves. We may harrangue upon the simple praise of virtue, but if we mention no reward for those who embrace it, we shall attract few profelytes. Experience assures us, that virtue, though in itself, and without a dowry, is perfectly amiable; yet it has not many Platonic admirers, those who are allured only by its native beauty and essential perfections: but where the promised rewards are commensurate to the desires, with what eagerness do we pursue the means to obtain them? Could we be assuredly convinced that godliness was great gain, or discern the great, the glorious rewards for blameless and innocent souls, how vigorously should we be inclined, and how easily animated to the rugged task of restraining our appetites, subduing our passions, eradicating our ill habits, and of submitting to other severities of religious mortification. What calmness does he enjoy, who has conquered his passions, and reduced his appetite into captivity to his reason. Not so does he who torments himself in the pursuit of those imaginary pleasures, which when obtained only ridicule his appetite, and vanish away before they gratify. He



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expected the highest degree of satisfaction, and drew in his own mind a long prospect of successive pleasures, producing unalterable content and incessant enjoyment ; but how vain are the hopes of man ! Disappointment and misery, domestic calamities or personal misfortunes, only terminate his long-drawn expectations : as certain fruit which tempts the eye, but deceives the palate ; which promises an agreeable taste, but yields an unfavoury bitterness.

THE mind of the hypocrite is not less uneasy than that of the voluptuary. There is no man so profligate, who would not willingly be accounted virtuous. Thus does he who is industrious to appear to the world, what in reality he is not, live in an open contradiction to his nature, and direct opposition to his own will. He acts in perpetual disguise, always contriving means to conceal his purposes. Pursuing various designs without firmness or constancy ; always resolving, and always fluctuating, while the fear of detection perplexes and terrifies him. He is in perpetual danger of disgrace and abhorrence, and liable to pervert the beloved views of his future advantage.

vantage. But he who is sincere in his words and actions, in the purposes of his heart, as well as in the sacrifice of his lips, is terrified by no apprehensions; approaches with boldness before God and man; needs no disguise, no artifice, or palliation; but with a treasure of confidence in his breast, ventures exposed and open to the eyes of the world, dreading the examination of no man, or the most strict and censorious survey of his actions. He enjoys an eminent tranquility of mind, and an uninterrupted peace of conscience.

AN unmolested conscience is the greatest earthly felicity which man can enjoy; it renders his condition easy, be his misfortunes ever so numerous. This was the triumph of St. Paul\* in the midst of his corporal severities and persecutions. But a wounded conscience is an agony never to be appeased, and a terror never to be abated. It was the horror of his guilt which rendered the fratricide of Cain† so intolerable, who was a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, fearing that every one

\* 2 Corinthians i. 12.

† Genesis iv. 14.



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who should find him would slay him. *\*The spirit of a Man will sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* The conscience is not improperly termed †a domestic god, which punishes as well as observes the secret thoughts of perverseness, and private actions of irregularity. St. Paul assures Timothy, that there are some men whose consciences are *seared with a hot iron*‡, are hardened and senseless, on which impiety can make no impression; that they are not under those dreadful apprehensions, which agitate other sinners. But this is very different from peace of mind; their consciences are only torpid and inactive for the present; but when some awakening providence of God shall rouse them from this lethargic insensibility, their woeful condition will sensibly affect them. That peace of mind which is enjoyed by the Pure in Heart, results from another principle, not from insensibility or indifference, from impenetrable obduracy of heart, or remorseless pertinacity of conduct; but

\* Proverbs xviii. 14.

† Βρῶτοῖς ἀπασιν ἡ Σκνείδνσις θεῶς.

Menander.

‡ 1 Timothy iv. 2.

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from having a *conscience void of offence toward God and toward men*\*.

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THE sight of God is promised to the Pure in Heart ; which sight is not that natural vision of God and his Attributes, which shine in the works of the creation ; for of this vision †the Gentiles and Heathens are partakers, as well as Christians. Nor is it that symbolical vision, which affords us some glimpse of the glory of God, by signs, shadows, and dark resemblances, as is said of Moses. ‡Nor is it the vision of Faith, in which we see God, as described to us in his nature, persons, and attributes, which the Christian only enjoys. All these relate alone to this life.

BUT this vision of God mentioned in the text, §is a clear prospect of the Deity ; not seeing him through a glass darkly, but face to face ; seeing *God as he is*||. Not that in the next life, which this vision regards, we shall behold him in his full quantity, nor so comprehend the divine essence, that nothing will be concealed from our sight ;

\* Acts xxiv. 16. † Romans i. 20. ‡ Exodus xxxiii. 25.

§ 1 Corinthians xiii. 12.

|| 1 John iii. 2.



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for that is impossible, both with respect to us, because we are finite, and incapable of such transcendent knowledge; and with respect to God, because he is infinite and incomprehensible. We shall apprehend him, not such as he is in his greatness\*, but as he is willing, and can be known by the creature, so far as he is pleased to communicate himself to us, and as our nature is capable to comprehend. We shall know him in his substance, nature, and attributes, much more perfectly and clearly than in this life, or even than Adam before his fall.

WHY, it may be asked, is this happiness of seeing God adjoined rather to purity of heart, than to any of the other virtues, as the humble and the meek, and the other holy men to whom our Saviour here promises happiness, shall enjoy this also, when they are perfected? for without the beatific vision, Heaven itself would not be Paradise, would yield neither gratification nor content. As God is a spirit, and not to be seen with eyes of impurity, it is expe-

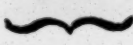
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dient that we cleanse and purify, and, in a manner, spiritualize our faculty, to be capable of discerning this spiritual object; for the humble and meek cannot see God, but as they purify their hearts from pride and wrath, from hypocrisy and uncleanness, which are obstructing beams in the eye of the soul.

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THIS phrase therefore does not mean only a mere intuition of God, or speculative knowledge of him and his attributes; but such a sight and knowledge as operate on our thoughts, affections, and actions, which unite our hearts to him, and which conform our faculties to the obedience of his will, thus capacitating and qualifying us for the real enjoyment of God himself: thus having the operations and functions of our inclinations, our hearts and affections, so regulated and disposed, that we may enjoy the true benefit of our sight and knowledge, which may be understood in reference to the capacity of finite creatures, and as far as these objects are attainable by a created, though a glorified being.

LET us no longer then be borne away with the torrent of our affections, with the  
tempta-



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temptations of the world, and that infinite variety of pleasing objects which so allure and transport us, but let us more frequently look towards God, and think of him as become frail and contemptible mortals, in a reverential and respectful obedience. If we desire to enjoy the vision of God, we must thoroughly cleanse our hearts, and lay aside all vain attractions and perishable pursuits, which detain and dazzle us; for *we cannot serve God and Mammon*. With the eye of contemplation we must behold it; and with the wing of meditation rear our souls aloft to embrace it. God invites us to abide with him, and to enjoy his perpetual presence. Wisdom exclaims in the streets, in the top of high places, before the city, at the entrance of the door, and bids us give ear to her instruction, which is better than gold and precious stones, no pleasure can be compared to it: we must *leave all and follow* her.

SERMON

## SERMON V.

On the DANGER of SELF CONCEIT, and  
MISCHIEF of EVIL SPEAKING.

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JAMES IV. 11,

*Speak not evil one of another, brethren.*

THESE words in their primary signifi-  
cation refer to some in the primitive  
ages of Christianity, who being yet en-  
tangled with the ceremonies of the law of  
Moses, spake evil of their christian bre-  
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for that is impossible, both with respect to us, because we are finite, and incapable of such transcendent knowledge; and with respect to God, because he is infinite and incomprehensible. We shall apprehend him, not such as he is in his greatness\*, but as he is willing, and can be known by the creature, so far as he is pleased to communicate himself to us, and as our nature is capable to comprehend. We shall know him in his substance, nature, and attributes, much more perfectly and clearly than in this life, or even than Adam before his fall.

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SERMON V.

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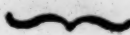
                      
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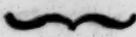
for absolving his disciples from the use of Mosaic ordinances, not long before to be observed; thus maliciously detracting from eternal truth. But there are many in the world, who, not from any zeal to maintain erroneous opinions, detract from their adversaries; but even on profane principles of pride, self-conceit, passion, and covetousness, first disagree with their neighbours, and then reproach them. This, we may observe, is the couched and intimated conclusion of the apostle in the text. They spake evil, not because they would defend what they thought the true religion, but because they detracted uncharitably from the just reputation of those who were not of their opinion. Thus, although he that maintains a wrong opinion himself, may sometimes detract, and speak evil of another who holds the true; it follows not but whoever also shall, for any other reason, maliciously calumniate his neighbour, commits a sin, and as certainly breaks this holy precept given by the apostle. As this seems to be the condition of many among us, let us consider the words of the text in this sense.

THIS

THIS negative precept must be perpetually regarded, without the intermission of one moment of time. Positive precepts, though they bind always, yet not at all times. For instance, we are commanded in Scripture *to pray always*, it is not therefore meant, that we should never do any thing but pray; but with zeal and fervour at all solemn and convenient occasions. Though positive duties may sometimes be omitted with respect to their actual performance, without sin; yet, by no means, and upon no occasion, must the negative be neglected. The duty of the text permits no moment for men to detract, and speak evil one of another. Of the unruly and ungovernable use of the tongue; what mischiefs, how manifold and how irreparable it causes in the world, the Apostle has already spoken in general in the foregoing chapter. Notwithstanding, he, knowing how inclined we are to transgress, saw it necessary again to admonish us, *to speak not evil one of another.*

DESIGNS of the most pernicious tendency, and practices of the most fatal consequences, have been frequently palliated with

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with pretence, and excused with plausibility. *St. Paul delivers a long catalogue of those sins and enormities which the Gentiles both approved and applauded. Thus, as we are unable to fathom the mystery of the iniquity of other men, so are we equally unacquainted with the deceitfulness of that sin in which we ourselves are hardened. We know not the depth of their projects, and we have almost as little insight into our own. Having no clearer knowledge of others than by their actions, charity engages us to think the best of them, as prudence does to prevent the worst. But though we are more fit to judge our own ways, yet how severe is the censure, and how rigorous is the sentence which we pass upon those things in which we have no concern! How quick-sighted to behold a mote in our brother's eye, when a beam is in the eye by which we see it! Thus is the opinion of our own works, as much too favourable and partial, as that of our neighbour too harsh and merciless. Forming a false opinion of ourselves, it is scarcely possible to avoid giving an unjust opinion of our neighbour.

* Romans i. 32.

** All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes,* is the aphorism of the wise man. Hence we may observe that there is no sin, but what those who practise it possess some apparent reason to maintain and to justify it; no sin but what some conceive proper and reasonable; and a purity is assumed even in a want of it. This acceptation of the sense of the wise man is warranted by Scripture, reason, and experience. When †Saul was accused by Samuel for his disobedience to the commands of God, he obstinately defended himself both against the Deity and his own conscience. ‡There are similar instances in the history of Pilate and the Jews,—in Pilate, who took water and washed his hands before the multitude, declaring himself innocent of the blood of Christ, though, at the same instant, he scourged him and delivered him to be crucified;—in the Jews, who thought it no sin to accuse innocence; let it, said they, if there be any offence, any crime committed in killing him, be upon us and our posterity for ever. From the same root sprung that insolent and presumptuous expression

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to our Saviour, ** Say we not well thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?* Other instances there are of †Uzza, of ‡Abishai, of §the Disciples, and of ||Jonah.

THERE is no evil which our thoughts suggest to us, but it assumes some garb of reason and expedience, as it cannot be suggested, but with the appearance and apprehension of some circumstances to endear it. Hence we approve that impiety in ourselves which we condemn as a crime in others. How openly does the infidel applaud himself in rendering religion as contemptible to the world as he is in the sight of God, of angels, and of wise men! What an instance of gallantry does he esteem it, to laugh at the naming of that God who holds him in derision! How fashionable is the exercise of intemperance, and how becoming an ornament to transgress the dictates of sobriety and wisdom! Is not the praise of manliness attached to the practice of ebriety, and the wit of the profane sensualist exaggerated with the art of blas-

* John viii. 48.

† 1 Chronicles xiii. 9. ‡ 1 Samuel xxvi. 8.—2 Sam. xvi. 9.

§ Luke ix. 54. || Jonah iv. 2.

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phemy? How rational is he in his own opinion, and how secure in his repose and worldly flatteries! Because he has *the praise of men, he imagines that God also commends that wisdom which is in truth but foolishness; or if it be called wisdom, is worldly and sensual. It is no wonder that an ignorant man should be thus deceived, when those who are capable to understand what †David affirms, have made it an argument of their excellence; that God loved them because they prospered; that he approved of their crime, because he permitted them to act; and, because they were successful, concluded themselves the favourites of heaven; that their exaltation here was an argument they should be raised hereafter; their preferment on earth an assurance that they should be promoted in heaven; and their advancement in this life was a sign of their predestination to glory in the next.

BECAUSE the double-minded professor of the gospel has expelled some vices, he supposes himself a new creature. This

* Psalm xlix. 18.

† Psalm lxxiii. 8. 12.

painted proselyte obtains a few rudiments, learns to speak in the sacred dialect, in the language of Canaan; therefore he presumes he is become a disciple: as if religion were imposed not as a duty, but an option; and to forsake any single vice would entitle us to the kingdom of heaven. We want not instances of those who have deduced their conversion by passing from one extreme to the other, from one vice to that directly contrary. Thus it shall be a virtue from a prodigal to become a miser. We know those who have bewailed the decay of christian discipline, yet have acted wickedness by a law; who have denied swearing, and established perjury; and from the abhorrence of idols have committed sacrilege.

How many cherish in themselves what they condemn in others! Are there not some who gratify their affections with a reluctant conscience? who sigh in the midst of their consolations, and whose hearts are sad even in their laughter? From whence does this delusion proceed? Is it not from that ignorance of Scripture, which springs from the want of attentive reading and serious



rious meditation? The word of revelation is a glass, for it discovers sin in its native deformity; it divides asunder the soul and spirit, and searcheth the *deep things of God*. But what is light to a blind man; or the most violent impressions to one who is bereft of sense? What is a rule without consulting it, and knowing how to apply it? Thus ignorance of Scripture betrays us into all the errors from which the knowledge of it would secure us. This must be attained by an exact diligence in reading it, and due search and cautious consideration of it. We are advised by St. James to look into and duly examine the law of liberty; not to cast a careless glance, but apply a steady and heedful attention to it. It will be useful to poize and regulate our actions; it will be a compass to steer our course amidst the waves, the ebbings, and flowings of the world; a guardian angel to keep us from the seduction of sin; a spy to discover the strength of the enemy, and the best defence against it. It will be as the balance of the sanctuary, to weigh every rule and precept of the gospel aright, that we pass not an incautious judgment either on ourselves or others; to pronounce our own

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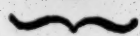
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to our Saviour, **Say we not well thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?* Other instances there are of †Uzza, of ‡Abishai, of §the Disciples, and of ||Jonah.

THERE is no evil which our thoughts suggest to us, but it assumes some garb of reason and expedience, as it cannot be suggested, but with the appearance and apprehension of some circumstances to endear it. Hence we approve that impiety in ourselves which we condemn as a crime in others. How openly does the infidel applaud himself in rendering religion as contemptible to the world as he is in the sight of God, of angels, and of wise men! What an instance of gallantry does he esteem it, to laugh at the naming of that God who holds him in derision! How fashionable is the exercise of intemperance, and how becoming an ornament to transgress the dictates of sobriety and wisdom! Is not the praise of manliness attached to the practice of ebriety, and the wit of the profane sensualist exaggerated with the art of blas-

* John viii. 48.

† 1 Chronicles xiii. 9. ‡ 1 Samuel xxvi. 8.—2 Sam. xvi. 9.

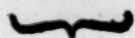
§ Luke ix. 54. || Jonah iv. 2.

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phemy? How rational is he in his own opinion, and how secure in his repose and worldly flatteries! Because he has *the praise of men, he imagines that God also commends that wisdom which is in truth but foolishness; or if it be called wisdom, is worldly and sensual. It is no wonder that an ignorant man should be thus deceived, when those who are capable to understand what †David affirms, have made it an argument of their excellence; that God loved them because they prospered; that he approved of their crime, because he permitted them to act; and, because they were successful, concluded themselves the favourites of heaven; that their exaltation here was an argument they should be raised hereafter; their preferment on earth an assurance that they should be promoted in heaven; and their advancement in this life was a sign of their predestination to glory in the next.

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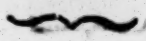


BECAUSE the double-minded professor of the gospel has expelled some vices, he supposes himself a new creature. This

* Psalm xlix. 18.

† Psalm lxxiii. 8. 12.

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painted proselyte obtains a few rudiments, learns to speak in the sacred dialect, in the language of Canaan; therefore he presumes he is become a disciple: as if religion were imposed not as a duty, but an option; and to forsake any single vice would entitle us to the kingdom of heaven. We want not instances of those who have deduced their conversion by passing from one extreme to the other, from one vice to that directly contrary. Thus it shall be a virtue from a prodigal to become a miser. We know those who have bewailed the decay of christian discipline, yet have acted wickedness by a law; who have denied swearing, and established perjury; and from the abhorrence of idols have committed sacrilege.

How many cherish in themselves what they condemn in others! Are there not some who gratify their affections with a reluctant conscience? who sigh in the midst of their consolations, and whose hearts are sad even in their laughter? From whence does this delusion proceed? Is it not from that ignorance of Scripture, which springs from the want of attentive reading and serious

rious meditation? The word of revelation is a glass, for it discovers sin in its native deformity; it divides asunder the soul and spirit, and searcheth the *deep things of God*. But what is light to a blind man; or the most violent impressions to one who is bereft of sense? What is a rule without consulting it, and knowing how to apply it? Thus ignorance of Scripture betrays us into all the errors from which the knowledge of it would secure us. This must be attained by an exact diligence in reading it, and due search and cautious consideration of it. We are advised by St. James to look into and duly examine the law of liberty; not to cast a careless glance, but apply a steady and heedful attention to it. It will be useful to poize and regulate our actions; it will be a compass to steer our course amidst the waves, the ebbings, and flowings of the world; a guardian angel to keep us from the seduction of sin; a spy to discover the strength of the enemy, and the best defence against it. It will be as the balance of the sanctuary, to weigh every rule and precept of the gospel aright, that we pass not an incautious judgment either on ourselves or others; to pronounce our own

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ways clean and upright, and those of our neighbour evil and unprofitable. It will wash off the paint from vice, and expose its native horror ; it will mark a deceiver, though he appear like an angel of light ; in Christ a Lord and Saviour, and in his royal law heaven and an eternity of happiness. That we may not be practically insensible of what we speculatively perceive, when we are convinced of the truth, let us prove ourselves, and weigh our works in the balance against the word of salvation, for we know by the authority of Scripture that the heart is deceitful. So apt are we to put a good construction upon what we do, to judge favourably of our actions, to praise that which we are inclined to practise, that we must try ourselves by the infallible touchstone of the Scripture, by the law and by the testimony. No longer then shall we judge ourselves by a comparative judgment with others, and pronounce our own purity, because others are more vile ; or with the ostentatious Pharisee, account ourselves righteous, because we are not Publicans. No more will the pre-engagement of inordinate affection pervert the opinion, no more will the temptations of
the

the heart allure to disobedience. We shall know that we walk not after the will of God when we comply with the dictates of our own ; or should we ever desire to taste the forbidden fruit, we shall not be angry when we are told that it is interdicted with "Touch not." And if we will establish our justification upon evangelical principles, with singularity and sincerity of heart, it must be proved from such a hope, as purifies, even as Christ was pure.

THE doctrine of the gospel is a perfect law, and our neglect to measure our actions by such a standard is great and dangerous ; they ought in every part to be answerable to it, to look as that looks, to move as that directs ; to make this law our compass to direct us ; to fit and proportion our obedience to it, that it may include the circle of all those virtues which prove us to be christians. It allows not to put darkness for light, bitter for sweet, or evil for good ; or because we consider our own ways clean, to conceive that our life is acceptable to God, and that we are not in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity.

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It is true, many are of the same opinion and belief with those who were convinced that the *merchandise of spiritual wisdom is better than silver, and her treasures than fine gold; that she is a rich treasure, a pearl of inestimable value, yet slight the purchase of her, hearken not to her voice, and regard not her counsels and instructions. It is not because we think ourselves wise and righteous, and need no repentance? Why else should we forfeit that blessing which reason tells us is prudence to forsake the world, and even our lives to obtain? We complain that we live in an age in which a man cannot trust his brother; by the wise man's judgment we can as little trust ourselves. We are prone to suppose that we are the friends of God, when we have no more fellowship with Christ, than Christ with Belial. Let us take heed, therefore lest we be hurried away with the error of the wicked, and beware of the groundless mistakes concerning godliness. By too high an opinion of our own sufficiency we are forever undone; we prevent all endeavours of amendment and reconcili-

* Matthew xiii. 44.

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liation with God, who weighs the spirit and searches the heart; who knows our secret frailties, and is a jealous avenger of the blood of Jesus. *What a man has why does he yet hope for?* so it is with those who entertain a haughty opinion of themselves. For why should they endeavour to attain that holiness which they already possess? Why should they purify themselves when they are pure? Why should they wash, when in their own judgment they are clean? Thus we tolerate those imaginations which confirm us in that presumptuous conversation, which renders us odious to God, and terrible to ourselves. Let us then be exhorted to beware of this delusion, which may be avoided by a true and serious examination of ourselves. And, that we fail not in the right operation of this antidote, and in a proper use of this remedy, let us examine ourselves at the time when the mind is calm, composed, and quiet; let us argue from certain principles with strictness and severity, nor desist to prosecute the trial of our own hearts to a full period and conclusion. For our uprightness cannot be acceptable, because we ourselves have such a persuasion of it; but a soul that sym-

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pathizes with the inspiration of God, that in the most real and sincere purposes turns and attends to him.

MAN is born, as philosophy assures us, with a mind unprincipled; and as divinity, like a wild ass's colt. The judgment of God is according to infinite wisdom and unerring knowledge; human reason is blind and imperfect. The judgment of God is impartial, the reason of man is pre-engaged and biased. The knowledge of God is certain and infallible, which David excellently proves by an argument drawn from the light of nature: and that the author is superior to the thing of which he is the cause, is a prerogative universally allowed. **Understand, ye brutish among the people; and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not be correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.* Thus the eternal Deity cannot be liable to such an imperfection, as to mistake the properties

* Psalm xciv. 8.

of his creatures, unless he first forget the rule by which they are designed to walk, which is utterly impossible. It requires much study and meditation to prove the sentiments which are useful and worthy to be embraced: and when we have thus laboured to inform our reason, we are still defective. Such is the natural darkness of the understanding, so clouded and eclipsed, that we may misapprehend many plainer truths which are openly revealed; or not apprehend their evidence; or fail in comparing them with our own life and manners. Sometimes through ignorance we cannot understand, and sometimes through the treachery of our thoughts and memories, we do not retain the same apprehensions, which would enable us to make a right estimate and conclusion of those passages of our conversation, which they were given to guide. And as the judgment of ourselves is but one single act, we may easily err, because there are so many things to be remembered and considered to ascertain the justice, integrity, and exactness of it. God sees not as man sees, partially and precipitately; he judges not as man judges, but passes righteous judgment; not according

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to outward appearance, or by the character which we receive of men, but according to the rectitude of our wills, the reality of our intentions, and sincerity of our hearts and affections.

GOD, who is infinitely perfect and happy in himself, enjoys an unchangeable tranquility; is not subject to the troubles and discomposure of corporal nature. But the most seraphic of men *are liable to the transports and emotions of passion: and how erroneous oftentimes our judgment is, God knows well, though we are ignorant. How does self-love bribe us to be favourable in our censures! It is not easily understood how peremptory and unteachable, imagination, obstinacy, and humour render some, who are really qualified with parts and faculties; and to what incurable opposition of the spirit of power they exasperate even those who would be thought men of temper and truth. As the understanding first moves the will; so the will influences the understanding. We determine only as we are inclined, passion de-

* Οριονταβεις—Acts xiv. 15.

taining us either from scrutinizing our condition, or from a clear discernment of its various circumstances. Hence proceeds that dangerous oversight of inveighing against what pleasantly entertains us, and of condemning in another person, what with as much delight we pardon in ourselves.

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THAT a principle of sincerity renders us approved of God is evident; because that which is spiritual in man, is the primary object of his delight and acceptance; and because a heart unsound and insincere consists not with a conversation that is entirely irreproachable. Every thing has so much the greater esteem, as it approaches nearer to the nature of that by which it is esteemed. So the soul of man is the noblest offering, because it is the livelier image, shadow, and representation of God, whom the eye neither hath, nor ever can behold. The mortal body becomes a temple of God by a virtuous soul which vivifies and quickens it. If the mind be not sanctified by the spirit, it is like those froward and rebellious darlings, whose transgressions are so much the more hateful, as they have experienced

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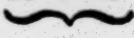

experienced more kindness and indulgence. The more excellent present a pure and pious soul would be to the God of purity, the greater abomination is manifest in its degeneracy and evil tendency. If the righteous, although they are habituated to holiness, do not live so purely, but that they sometimes are liable to sin; how can it be thought that those who act not from the fear of God, should be in their outward demeanour unreprieveable! If those in whom the spirit of God dwells, are guilty of actual sins; how can it be otherwise, but unregenerate and unsanctified persons should live, and habitually remain in some unrighteousness! In this is the distinction betwixt a saint and a hypocrite, the true sons and counterfeit servants of God: the first is overtaken in some act of sin, the other makes a practice of it; one is surprized into it, and the other trafficks in it. If the work of holiness do not influence us, then are we in a state of nature; and if a man speak and do, as the abundance of his depraved heart prompts, he will visibly be far from speaking and doing, as one that shall be judged by the law of liberty. By following the direction of his mind, he will

will be necessarily betrayed ; and though he do many things, it shall be a mark of his obduracy and impenitence, customarily and carelessly to omit some. For evangelical perfection consists in a regard to all, though there may be many failures and breaches of particular commandments. In deceitful pretenders there will be found designed and premeditated wickedness, and allowed and studied ungodliness. We shall find them making their belly their god ; stating gain for godliness ; loving the wages of unrighteousness ; and using perhaps a profession of piety to obtain a livelihood. **But by their fruits ye shall know them.*

HENCE may be gathered the deficiency of external righteousness, and pretended holiness. As the soul is then alive from the dead, when it bends the body to piety and virtue ; so the outward works are the works of grace, when they are the issues of a laborious heart, the product and result of well-disposed and well-ordered affections. The external exercise of good is indeed but

* Matthew vii. 20.

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a form without substance, and an image without life, the motion of an engine insensible of its own action. Native integrity is so much more acceptable, as it is more perfect; for man is never so constant in his endeavours after virtue, as corrupt nature is in the suggestions of evil; and that which principally commends our obedience to the law of God, is our propensity to disobey it.

THOSE who make use of the art of diminishing what is good, or augmenting what is evil in another, are too well skilled in a peculiar kind of arithmetic; marvelously multiplying the faults and infirmities, and detracting from the worth and virtues of those whom they would defame; and whatsoever good in any man they cannot annihilate by denying, they will transform by extenuation. Thus did the Jews brand the primitive christians with the charge of schism and heresy; ** concerning this sect we know, said they, that every where it is spoken against.* Thus the subtlety of the papist brands us on the one hand with the same

* Acts xxviii. 22.

accusation; on the other hand, the factious nonconformist charges us with popery and superstition. But WISDOM IS JUSTIFIED OF HER CHILDREN. It is to God, and not to them, we shall one day stand or fall.

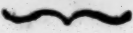
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BUT if the detractor observes that the virtues and talents of the person he would defame, are so evident as not to be denied, his next endeavour is to diminish them, to speak at least sparingly of them, and not according to due desert. So Satan to Eve, did not wholly deny the bounty and goodness of God towards them, yet he laboured to persuade her it was less than he might have well bestowed, in forbidding them to eat of the tree of knowledge; as if a chief part of their happiness had been withheld from them, that instead of being men, they might have been as gods.

IF he fail in this attempt, he will endeavour to slander the manner of performing any thing that is unquestionably good. As the Pharisees, when they could not deny that Christ had cast out devils from many who

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who were possessed with them; *but by what means said they, does he cast them out? by mere imposture and magic, by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.

IF this art will not serve his purpose, he censures an action, as done to some base and illiberal end. So Moses bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, a deliverance confessedly great; †but to what end (said the first founders of turbulent nonconformity, Dathan and Abiram) but to *lord it over God's heritage*.

By these means the detractor endeavours to diminish the good he sees, or suspects is seen by others, in the person he is eager to defame. Nor is he thus satisfied, but multiplies evil against his neighbour by a manifold progress; by feigning what is not true; by disclosing what is disgraceful; by amplifying and augmenting what he feigns and discloses. He forms some false imputation of evil to wound and blemish the good name of his neighbour, and to render his person contemptible. Thus the Phari-

* Matthew xii. 24.

† Numbers xvi. 13.

sees accused our Saviour, sometimes of gluttony, sometimes of blasphemy, sometimes of prophaneness, of being the friend of publicans and sinners, sometimes of sedition, and of intentions hostile to Cæsar.

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BUT the slanderous detractor, when it will more suit his purpose, discloses what he thinks will be accounted a fault by others, though perhaps in itself it be innocent; yet such as he hopes at least will bring hatred on the person he would defame. *As Doeg told Saul what had been done by Ahimelech the priest. The circumstances in themselves were true, but spoken to one who would understand in the worst sense, as indeed he did; for Saul was incensed, and deemed it a conspiracy against him. To these intimations he not only adds, but augments what he can, to make it appear evil before men. For what is wanting in evident proof, malevolent suspicion will more than supply. In this manner did the treacherous friends of Job deal with him, misinterpreting his words from their proper meaning†. Yet we

* 1 Samuel, xxii. 10.

† Job xxxiv. 7.

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know that God, who never approves of sinners, approved of him. Thus do they swallow up the good name of their neighbour by injurious detractions, or blast it by false and slanderous suspicions; like an unwholesome wind, which scorches the tender blossoms of fruitful trees. And like the wind also in this respect, no man knows whence it comes or whither it goes, is the practice of those who revile others. They will disperse their whispers, as it were, in little rivulets, till they run like the great river in Egypt, with seven streams, but none could yet discover its original source. They furnish the vulgar with discourse, and not wisdom only after some labour (from little springs growing into rivers, and from rivers into seas) but also madness and folly, which too, like the head of the Nile, cannot be discovered.

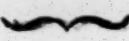
LET us, to avoid these obnoxious and hateful sins, both of self-sufficiency and detraction, every one consult his own heart. This must be our first attempt, though by no means all that we are to do. It is not enough that an officer find a murderer or a thief in his lurking retreat, but also to apprehend

prehend him, that he may be examined, to endure the punishment due for his offence. The same is required in every one, who finds himself guilty of self-sufficiency, and of slander, its concomitant, to condemn and execute these sins in himself. The great necessity of this duty may be plainly discerned both by the testimony of scripture, and the evidence of reason. Let us abstain then from treading in such mischievous steps, and cease to calumniate and speak evil one of another. We shall be abhorred by all wise and prudent men; and are assured that we are *both haters and hated of God. † *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off*; as if David meant to intimate, though whisperers and revilers obtain credit and esteem with worldly princes, yet with me they shall have no encouragement, God hateth and I will persecute it. It behoves the hearer therefore that he be not too credulous; that charity be not wounded with that stroke of the slanderous tongue, which, with the good name of another, is assaulted. The defence of the ear against them is required,

* Romans i. 30.

† Psalm ci. 5.

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from the glimmering light of nature that is yet left us. * "Do not easily believe an accuser," are the words of an antient heathen.

How dangerous and baneful is the practice of this sin to the peace and comfort of society! It insinuates into the heart by little and little; and if the least sin requires great strength of christian resolution to break it off, how much more will the difficulty be, to check a habit of it. The foundation of sin in the mind, is pride and all its various appendages; and he that has it †*shall pour out abominations*, says the son of Syrach: *only by pride*, says Solomon, *cometh contention*: pride and arrogance, says God, *do I hate*. ‡ Our Saviour himself accounts it in the number of the deadly sins which defile the soul. § St. John divides all the sin in the world into three ranks, and pride is one. He that is proud, abuses both the temporal and spiritual blessings he receives. He is displeased at every the least injury, and proceeds to hate the

* *Difficilem habere aurem ad crimina.*

† Prov. xiii. 10.—viii. 13. ‡ Mark vii. 22. § I John ii. 16.

person

person who offers it; and because he hates, he detracts and flanders, he reviles and execrates him.

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LET as many then as know themselves to have hitherto been concerned in any course of sin, consider the fearful reward of his work, should he proceed to finish it to the utmost period of his life? but particularly such, whose pride in their hearts has already caused them to speak evil one of another. And would we escape the terrible and eternal punishment of it, let us first avoid sedition, schism, and faction, as we are subjects; all cruel, injurious, and revengeful practices, as we are neighbours and members of a family; and beware of bitter reviling, of flandering, of calumniating one another. Then also must we cast away all proud conceptions, all lofty imaginations; which indeed are the first sparks of fire which enkindle and inflame the mind to sin; and sparks in this respect also, that they lurk secretly in the heart of man to consume him. Let us pluck up this pride by the roots, for it is the first inducement even in the heart of the covetous, by which they learn to despise their Maker.

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the true God, before they dare to adore their mammon, a false God. Therefore, how many soever the branches, how great soever the limbs, or how numerous the fruits of sin, yet all proceed from the root of pride. It produces injustice and injurious dealing, uncharitableness, impiety, and folly. It was pride which caused a disturbance in the Roman empire, and made the Roman eagles wander almost over the known world. It was what caused such a deluge of blood, which almost dismembered the whole empire, when Cæsar could not endure an equal, nor Pompey a superior. It was what cast the angels out of heaven, aspiring to be equal to God himself. It was what caused our first parents to forfeit Paradise, thinking it not sufficient to know only what was good, but considered it a greater happiness to understand what was evil also; and thus entailed a curse upon themselves and their posterity for ever. It was pride dethroned Nebuchadnezzar, and divested him of his regal honour, banished him the society of man, and reduced him to associate with the beasts of the forest. It was pride caused the angel of the Lord to smite Herod, *be-

Acts xii. 21.

cause,

cause, after he had made an oration to the people from the judgment seat, and was commended by them, calling it *the voice of God not of Man*, he gave not God the glory, and was punished for his presumption. Every man who examines the Scripture, will have sufficient reason to be assured that **God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

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AMONG those, therefore, who find the fruit of sin in their life and conversation, let the detractor consider that the root of pride is in his heart. Let him reflect how distant he is from God, what a sea of troubles is between him and heaven; which, when he will proudly hoist his sails thither, the storm of the vengeance of the Almighty will descend upon him. What precept of the holy law of God does not condemn him? What page of the holy book of God does not curse him? What creature of his does not abhor him? Let him turn, however late, to God, who will have mercy upon him, and to the Lord, who will abundantly pardon. For the axe is laid at the root of the tree; he will not

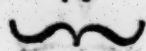
* 1 Peter v. 5.

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suffer it to grow in heaven, because it changed angels into furies ; nor in Paradise, because it changed saints into sinners ; nor in his church, because it converts sincere penitents into rebellious children. But, whom he thus plants hereafter in heavenly glory, he exhorts first to plant themselves in his grace here. We must *take root in humility, be watered with the tears of true repentance, grow up in desire toward heaven, hunger and thirst after righteousness, and then bring forth the fruit of holiness toward God, of justice, mercy, and peace towards men.

IN many specious results of nature, it is to be questioned, whether there be not some things without as well as within, which spoil the whole procedure of its ornament and glory. It is not, therefore, a fair carriage towards our neighbour which marks an innocent and blameless life. It is not presenting ourselves to God, in his solemn ordinances, and attending to the delivery of his truth, that infallibly justifies ; though we even bow our knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are

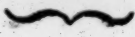
Matthew v. —.

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not therefore just. Though we hear his word gladly, though we do many things as the Evangelists, or take delight in approaching to God as the Prophet; and though our outward actions be virtuous and inoffensive, yet, if there be not charity out of a pure heart, our efforts are vain. For if the good actions of a just man, have inherent blemishes, the good actions of the wicked doubtless want that concurrence and agreement of the heart, without which they are unprofitable and impious. And if external righteousness be so unavailable, what will become of the notoriously ungodly? Where shall the profane and scandalous appear, who, in their lives and practices lean only upon evil? or where the hypocrite, who, instead of sincerity of spirit, studies to varnish it over, that it appear not to men in its real deformity?

LET us then judge ourselves with that righteous judgment, with that freedom and impartiality, which constitute the character of Christianity. Let us have no better opinion of our own ways, than the word of God, individually applied to ourselves, both allows and approves. Certainly it is
not

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not our judgment, but the infallible and unerring judgment of God, which must remain immutable; certainly it is according to the estimate which God forms of our ways, not our persuasion of them, by which we shall be judged hereafter. With what degree of prudence then can we rest satisfied with a partial inquiry, with a superficial examination; with a fond conceit of our own security, built upon so weak and sandy a foundation? How can we longer imagine that we live in good works, when we are dead in trespasses and sins! How can we allow that judgment of ourselves, when, on comparison, it is contrary to the word by which we must be directed; contrary to the rule by which we must hereafter be tried! How can we presume to pursue evil upon the groundless persuasion of our integrity, till we find our doom pronounced, and our ruin irremediable.

It is no time either for sleep or solace, when so many weighty and momentous concerns surround us; upon which depend our well or ill being, our felicity or misery for ever. Let us beware of such vain confidence, presumption, and Pharisaical pride.

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It behooves us to be jealous of committing that iniquity which the Almighty is jealous to punish; to be careful, lest we offend that God, who will assuredly chastise us with wrath and indignation. The wise man has branded such with the ignominious and reproachful name of fools.

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LET us see therefore, that our judgment be such, as not only manifests what is old, but also produces what is new; otherwise, we shall be worse than Adam after his fall, when we know our frailty, but endeavour not to hide it. That we may join a serious conclusion of what is to come, to what is present, let it also be a judgment which will incite us to singularity of heart, and sincerity of manners. Sincerity requires an adequate employment, and we must be suitably busied in applying ourselves to the study of this rule, with that gravity, diligence, and resolution, which direct and move to the practice of it, to piety, to virtue, and to charity.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

On the DUTY of REPENTANCE.

ACTS XXVI. 20.

But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the Coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

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VI.

ST. JOHN the Baptist introduced his preaching with a forcible recommendation of repentance, urging it with irresistible energy on his hearers, that, by the practice of it, they might be qualified for the kingdom of heaven. When this great forerunner of Christ had preached this doctrine to the world, and had washed away the

the sins of many in the laver of regeneration, that he might prepare their hearts for the reception of the gospel, which was shortly to be preached by Christ himself, perceiving the Pharisees and Seducers come to his baptism, he took particular notice of them, as the two principal sects of the Jews. One of them apparently a devout party, which had the reputation of uncommon sanctity, and as St. Paul calls them, *the *straitest sect* of the Jewish religion, though abounding in their words and actions with dissimulation and hypocrisy: the other a loose and profligate people, who disbelieved a future state of rewards and punishments, and deemed the whole happiness of man to consist in sensual enjoyments. St. John perceiving these men approach his baptism, although he upbraided their former practices, the hypocritical sanctimony of one, and the abandoned profligacy of the other, yet he directed them in the only path of future security, to †*bring forth fruits meet for repentance*. This was the doctrine of our Saviour; and it was no inconsiderable part of St. Paul's

* Acts xxvi. 5.

† Matthew iii. 2.

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commiffion to exhort the world to repentance, as his narrative in the words of the text, addreffed to King Agrippa, fufficiently proves.

OUR Saviour has warned us of the danger of cafting the unclean fpirit out of our fouls, if we do not replenifh them with other guefts; for though returning, he fees them fwept and garnifhed, yet if he find them empty alfo, he goes, fays he, and takes with him feven other fpirits more wicked than himfelf, and they enter in and dwell there, and *the *laft ftate of that man is worfe than the firft*. Thus to fecure our minds from a dangerous relapfe, after we have once difpoffeffed vice, we muft immediately furnifh them with virtuous difpofitions, muft *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*.

To conform to the whole practice of religion, to apply to the exercife of thofe virtues and duties which were formerly omitted; to poffefs the mind with a fenfe of real devotion, to meditate on the good-

* Matthew xii. 45.

ness, the forbearance, and long-suffering of God, is the peculiar endeavour of him who engages in the task of repentance. His heart is inflamed with a fervent love of the contemplation, and a pious zeal in the prosecution of holiness; he affectionately dedicates himself to the service of God, and cheerfully undertakes the most difficult parts of religion.

If he may have heretofore injured his neighbour, either by oppression or calumny, defrauded him of his property and defamed his credit, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and prove the sincerity of his resolution, he endeavours to lessen the injury committed, both by making reparation for one, and retracting the other. He well knows that all other acts of religion will not be acceptable, unless he reconcile himself to his offended brother. **If thou bring thy gift to the altar, says Christ, and there rememberest that thy brother has aught against thee, any wrong to charge thee with that thou hast done, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled*

* Matthew v. 23.

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to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. The gift, though brought to the altar, must be unoffered, until we have solicited peace for former offences. He will mortify his passions, suppress his appetite, and restrain his inclinations. He will be vigilant to mark every temptation which may prompt and allure him to his accustomed vices: his resolution will be firm to abandon them, lest his nature, easily persuaded in the moment of forgetfulness, obtains his compliance, and seduces him into the commission of his former transgressions. He will prepare his mind with a variety of conflicting passions; arm himself with all the arguments necessary for his defence, which both reason and revelation can supply. He will frequently revolve on those motives which first wrought his mind into an aversion of himself, and which framed his first resolutions to forsake his vices. If indeed, from a pretended detestation of covetousness, he purposes in his heart to abandon it; and afterwards declines not into the exercise of liberality, but of temperance, who will suppose that covetousness was his former vice? What change of mind will he discover? If he determine

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to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, he must introduce into his heart habits directly opposite; exercise those virtues which are suitable to his first purposes, and which tend to an immediate change both of mind and practice.

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HIS resolutions of repentance will be sincere, universal, and lasting. He knows it is not a bare and empty purpose of amendment of life, which will recommend him to God, not such professions only, which are as *sounding brass and as tinkling cymbals*; but such as are productive of virtue and goodness. That cannot be either serious or sincere, which brings forth no fruit, continues an unprofitable thought, and is never reduced into act; it is rather the effect of shame or of danger, than of a true sense of the native deformity and odium of vice. Whoever has proceeded no further than a mere resolution, has made no advancement in holiness of life, has mortified no appetite, subdued no rebellious passion. But if the resolution of repentance issued from a radical abhorrence of sin, it would commence a lasting principle of excellence, and animate the piety and integrity of his ac-

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tions ; he would at all times avoid the occasions of evil, and struggle in the fortification of his own mind, by training his inclinations to virtuous performances. Vice would recede as virtue advanced ; one decaying, as the other improved. The action must specify the intention ; and if there be no fruit of repentance, it is unfound and insincere. **Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ; think it not sufficient to characterize yourselves, to be diligent in hearing and not in practising your duty. †Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.*

HE whose resolutions of repentance are universal, will not forsake one, and indulge himself in another vice. It cannot therefore be supposed that a covetous man is a real penitent, because he is not prodigal ; or an ambitious man, because he is not intemperate. He knows that it is no argument of true repentance, to be cautious of one vice, or to detest another, if he unconcernedly practise a third. This is only

* James i. 22.

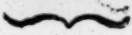
† Romans ii. 13.

On the Duty of Repentance.

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pursuing another path to destruction: as one single sin may as well alienate his affections, and indispose him for religion and virtue, as if he had entertained them all, and equally troublesome to disentangle his mind from it. It must be a captivating vice to enamour him, for which he can divorce all other passions, and therefore more difficult to withdraw it. Because it is contracted, it acts with heat and vigour; but if it were dilated and extended, it would quickly expire of itself. And although he that kills another, does not by that act commit adultery; yet murder is as manifest a breach of the law, and implies equal contempt of that authority which confirmed the whole. To indulge any darling vice, is like carefully guarding every gate of a besieged town but one, at which the enemy may enter without resistance. Herod, at the preaching of John the Baptist, **did many things, and heard him gladly*; cast off some of his sins; but as long as he cherished others, his resolutions were unavailable. Let us therefore relinquish our habitual sins, and never return to them again; nor

** Mark vi. 20.*

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use

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use covetousness instead of liberality, spiritual pride instead of carnal security, malice or envy in exchange for intemperance, that our amendment be not short-lived, and that our future righteousness may satisfy for our former frailties.

THE task of repentance is both difficult and tedious ; for it is not easy to conquer and correct bad inclinations, to render our sensual appetites obsequious to reason, to compose our passions into a regular and steady order, to cleanse our hearts from vanity, from perverseness, from sloth, and other vicious distempers. A clear knowledge of our duty, with a right disposition to perform it, is not readily obtained. The inclinations will make a vigorous resistance, the passions will make frequent and violent sallies, and will not be tamely captivated to reason.

OUR duty consists of various parts ; there are many rules to be learned, and precepts to be observed, which demand a persevering attention. We cannot change our nature in an instant ; for as ill habits were introduced by a constant repetition and customary

customary practice, and cannot be completed by one act; so they require the same frequency of contrary acts to destroy them, and must advance by such steps and degrees as their nature permits. Vice arrives not to maturity in a moment; thus when once a man is familiar with the mystery of iniquity, it is difficult to conform his temper to the rules of virtue. One habit cannot otherwise be destroyed, nor the other produced, than by a constant exercise of acts either opposite or suitable.

THE sooner we begin this necessary work, the easier it will be: and delay will render it more laborious. When once the current of vice has broken our innocence, when the boundaries of modesty and conscience are overthrown by the neglected violence of the stream, sin then overflows the mind. The physician applies his skill in vain, when through long neglect the disease is grown inveterate. Such is the state of sin; which infects and putrifies, when we have suffered it to usurp an uncontrollable dominion over us. It is not without difficulty dethroned; the faculties are not easily restored to their just freedom

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and authority; a deranged reason is not presently resettled; a perverted will is not in an instant rectified; corrupted affections are not immediately reformed. To quicken and invigorate a torpid conscience, to restore the mind miserably defaced to its original beauty, and recover it when impaired, to its former integrity, is the work only of industry and vigilance. If we wait till our corrupt affections spontaneously nauseate their beloved objects; and the prospect of difficulty which attends every new and unpractised course in the beginning vanishes away, we shall be no nearer our repentance, we shall make our resolutions of amendment in vain. He who has indulged himself in the constant exercise of vice, even in old age, is its votary; and though he has not the power to act, he pleases himself in the thoughts of it, and his imagination supplies the impotence of his nature.

THAT we must all die, is a certain and undeniable truth; and who knows but this day may be his last? To delay therefore the work of repentance until to-morrow may be too late; the night may suddenly overtake

overtake us, when no man can work. What wages can we expect; who have loitered all the day? Had we indeed a certain portion of time secured to us, we were more excusable, though it might be, not more safe: but when we have not one moment except the present, which can be called our own, why should happiness be ventured at so great an uncertainty? **Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day will bring forth*: pretend not to have to-morrow at your own disposal, for you know not what alterations it may cause. While you are forming your projects of unmeasurable duration, and dreaming of an indefinite term of years, to be added to those that have passed, what security have you against the same fate with the rich man in the gospel? †who was arrested in the very summit of his imagination, after he had provided for the ease and enjoyment of many years, and a long tenure of this earthly tabernacle, his soul was immediately required of him.

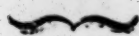
THERE are many vices which impair the nature, and debilitate both the corporeal

* Proverbs xxvii. 1.

† Luke xii. 20.

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and mental faculties of man, and directly lead to the mansions of the grave. *He goes**, as Solomon speaking of the vicious man, *as an ox to the slaughter till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteneth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.* How many have been ruined by intemperance and excess, and most unnaturally have perverted those blessings which God has given for the support of nature, to the overthrow and destruction of it! How often have malice, envy, and discontent against others, terminated in a cruel revenge upon themselves! By the wild fury and ungovernable extravagance of their passions have they inflamed their minds, and disgraced their nature; the effect of which has been a visible consumption of body, and a perpetual vexation of spirit.

BUT though the divine goodness should bear with the provocations of the wicked; and he should live to his expected old age, which he designs as the time of his reformation, how unequal will he then be to

* Proverbs vii. 22.

so difficult a task, and how incapable then of performing it! After he is so long habituated to vice, it becomes connatural, and he may as easily change his nature as his mind. **Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.* By the long and incessant practice of sin, the mind is transformed; when no breath of holy affection proceeds from the heart, and all sense of duty is lost or forgotten, it cannot be expected that without a miracle he should rise to newness of life; and being bound hand and foot, †with Lazarus come out of the grave to be unloosed.

WHAT we once dislike, every hour will increase our aversion: and he who adjourns his repentance on presumption of future supplies, may at last be utterly unable to repent. For though God has promised to receive the returning penitent, yet he has no where assured the assistance of his spirit to those who have so long *grieved* and abused it. There is a time when he will be no more intreated; ‡*when you spread forth*

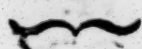
* Jeremiah xiii. 23.

† John xi. 44.

‡ Isaiah i. 15.

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*your hands, says he, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear. *Though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. It will be too late to knock when the doors are already shut; to call for mercy in the time of judgment. †To day, says the Holy Ghost, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. ‡Now, says St. Paul, is the accepted time, now only is the day of Salvation.*

DELAY therefore, in the duty of repentance, is a presumption vain and dangerous. God has told us that *his spirit shall not always strive with man.* He delivered §Pharaoh to a reprobate state of mind, because he had so often resisted the importunities of grace. Esau is stiled a prophane person for undervaluing the privileges of his birth-right; and although he sought the blessing with tears, his intreaty was rejected, and his repentance ineffectual. God bestowed ¶the glories of a kingdom, and the gifts of his spirit upon Saul; yet because he rebelled against him, he was punished for his arrogance. These considerations should

* Jeremiah xi. 11.

¶ Genesis vi. 3.

† Hebrews iii. 7.

§ Hebrews xii. 17.

‡ 2 Corin. vi. 2.

¶ 1 Sam. xxviii.

move us to an early reformation, while the time is our own; before our sins have vitiated our nature, and before we have forced God's spirit from us. Necessary duties are not so neglected in our bodily concerns; no man will defer to satisfy his hunger, upon the most endearing account whatever. We are not indeed so sensibly affected with the danger which attends the neglect of one, as of the other, therefore we provide not equal care and circumspection. Let us then ponder the necessity of a reconciliation with God, and the misery which awaits our dilatory contrition, that *iniquity be not our ruin*.*.

BUT a fatal impediment to a speedy repentance, is the flattering hopes of a long life. Some are young and strong, and consider death as yet at a great distance; and that after they have enjoyed this pleasure, gratified this lust, and appeased that appetite, they may then commence the duties of religion. †*When the keepers of the house tremble, as the preacher describes the feebleness of old age, and the strong men bow them-*

* Ezekiel xviii. 31.

† Ecclesiastes xii.

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selves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows are darkened; in these last decays of nature, it is time with them to relinquish vanity, and apply to the service of God. But will that be a proper time to dedicate to so sacred and awful a purpose? will the consecration of those days be sufficiently acceptable, when they have no pleasure themselves, and are too debilitated by the infirmities of age to submit to the force of temptation.

CAN we have the presumption to think (if we should live to our desired old age) that God will be pleased with the mere refuse of our lives, the very dregs of our nature? That, after we have spent the best of our time and strength to ourselves alone, God will accept us? What an improper time is this for repentance! Then to resolve on a new life, when we are departing from the world, when we have no probability to accomplish it. Let us not flatter ourselves with the vain hopes of many years, but always bear in our minds the great frailty of human life; how soon we may be removed hence and no more seen; how many dangers

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we are daily exposed to from without, how many diseases may oppress us within; that we may look no further than the present time, and use every moment as our last. If it then please God to add to our days, every hour will be more welcome, that we may pass it in the improvement of holy purposes. It was the advice of a heathen poet to his friend, *to consider every day as his last, if he would receive the next with satisfaction. When we are thus taught to number our days, shall we instantly apply our hearts unto wisdom; and because we know not what to-morrow may produce, shall we be earnest to secure that pardon to-day, which we may otherwise never obtain.

ANOTHER impediment to a speedy amendment of our lives, is the presumed efficacy of a death-bed repentance. There is no one upon the bed of sickness, but the worst of fanatics, who does not pretend a mighty sorrow for the error of his ways, and implore God's mercy in the pardon

* *Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremam,
Grata superveniet, quæ non sperabitur, hora.*

HORAT. EPIST.

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and forgiveness of his sins. They are encouraged to risk so adventurous a hazard from the case of the thief upon the cross, who, for his belief of Christ, though at the very hour of his death, received the promise of eternal happiness. **To-day*, says he, *thou shalt be with me in Paradise*. It is true, the thief had been a notorious malefactor; and it is as true, that that last act of his life, his acknowledgment of Christ at his death, saved his soul. But to believe on him in the very lowest degree of humiliation, under the pains and ignominy of the cross, when the faith of all his disciples was staggered, when Peter himself, who was always forward to confess his master's divinity, had disowned and deserted him, was a very eminent act of faith. So strange and unparalleled a conversion might well entitle him to the regard of a merciful Saviour. †In the attainment of faith, he seized the first opportunity, for, till now, he knew neither Christ nor his religion, he could not therefore sooner embrace it. But this can never

* Luke xxiii. 43.

† Ad consequendam fidem non fuit illi extrema hora, sed prima; nec religionem ante, nec Christum scivit.

St. AUGUSTINE.

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be the case of surviving christians, who pass their time under the healing admonition of the gospel. The deep sense he expressed of his former sins; his charity to the other thief, his companion in iniquity, in whom he wished by his exhortations to have wrought the same abhorrence of his crimes; and several other circumstances are far different from whatever we can pretend to imitate. So little encouragement can we have from this instance of a death-bed repentance! For, although the thief, embracing Christ under all these disadvantages was mercifully received, yet with what reason can we expect the same acceptance, who, so often and so wilfully, against the clear revelation of the gospel, and his repeated admonitions, withstand the means of salvation? Allowing the thief to have been in our circumstances, had before frequently heard of him, and have been persuaded that he was the Son of God, the true Messias, yet to have continued in sin, and at last had received grace to repent and to rely on his merits, yet even this can be no more an encouragement for us to presume upon the same mercy, than to expect

bread

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bread from heaven, *because God thus once miraculously fed the Israelites. It is a maxim in divinity that extraordinary cases are no rule. †Enoch's translation alive into heaven is no testimony that we shall have the same honour and privilege; nor is it sufficient for our faith that we shall rise before the last trump, because some saints arose with Christ to grace the triumph of his resurrection. Why then, should this single instance (for the Scripture affords no other) be deemed a sufficient plea for us to presume on the efficacy of a death-bed repentance? Let us rather cast away such fond and illusive suggestions, and immediately apply ourselves ‡*to the things which belong to our peace*; for it is scarcely probable that any man who has spent his life in an open violation of his duty, can be sincerely penitent on the bed of death; that he should utterly abandon and fearfully abhor his sins in an instant as it were, which he indulged his whole life, and reconciled to his nature.

LET these considerations urge us to make our early peace with God; that when we

* Exodus xvi. —. † Genesis v. —, ‡ Matthew xxvii. 52.
approach

approach our end, the terrors of our mind may not aggravate the pains of our body; that we may quietly resign our souls into the hands of God, and be prepared to give an acceptable account of our stewardship.

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SERMON VII.

On APOSTACY.

HEBREWS III. 12.

*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you
an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from
the Living God.*

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OUR Saviour applying the degrees of punishment to the various aggravations of sin, avows the judgment of God to be according to right and equity. Thus, the author of this epistle *knowing the terrors of the Lord, persuades men, urging them to hold fast their integrity as they would their hope.* For, although all final obduracy be unpardonable, yet there is no disobedience more endangers the soul, or provokes the
wrath

wrath of heaven than apostacy from our first faith, love, and purity; no iniquity more heinous than turning away from the first works; and no ungodliness more requires repentance than that of which we have once repented.

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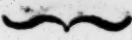
SINCE the enjoyments of men need some present application of objects to their faculties, that which is pleasant will afford a gratifying and timely accommodation. Hence past offences are pardoned and forgotten in those that sue for our amity and fellowship; and present injuries are resented in those that have been our friends. And although God may rejoice in all that he has done, or intends to do, yet he esteems the proceedings of men as they do other things, according to their present nature and property. Thus he threatens sinners, although he establishes their election according to the purpose and counsel of his own will; and thus he speaks comfortably to those that are sanctified, although he foreknows their degeneracy into vice and folly.

THE state of a man cannot be ascertained to that nicety, supposing him to repent

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and implore the divine mercy with his expiring breath, and at the very moment of his soul's departure. Such examples are indeed very rarely to be found in the world, amongst the multitudes which are daily leaving it. There are several apprehensions necessary to an act of repentance; and how, in the last moments of life, can there be a competent space for the exercise of a justifying faith? It is necessary to an act of justifying faith, that there be a hatred and condemnation of ourselves; giving glory to God by humble confession, desiring his favour and his love, having a boldness and assurance in beseeching it through the apprehension of his promises, equal to the terror that is endured by the knowledge of his threats.

SHOULD we be an eye-witness of the manner of any one taking a final farewell of the world, and bidding adieu to time; should we find him rationally expressing his sorrow for his impiety and contempt of God and his sacred laws, yet immediately before his dissolution hear him venting speeches unworthy of the Lord who bought him, and such as are the result of a despairing

ing conscience: unless there was some probability that the visitations of the Almighty had bereft him of understanding and deprived him of sense (with submission to better judgments, and with regard to the charity due to his condition) we should be unwilling to pronounce a sure and certain hope of a better resurrection. And if there can be really such an apostacy, who shall make an atonement to God for him? His former purgation of himself by repentance is ineffectual and invalid, and all his righteousness will not be remembered.

THERE must be a perseverance from the time of the last repentance, be it sooner or later; and if one act of repentance has been rendered void by a relapse into sin and infidelity, another act of repentance is required to justification. There must then be *fruits* brought forth *meet for repentance*, consequently a *holding fast*, and a continuance; be it for no longer time than in which the wise virgins arose and trimmed their lamps, when proclamation was made in the street at midnight that the bridegroom was at hand. By *holding fast* we are thus far *partakers of Christ*, from the instant of our first conviction

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and change. To resist and frustrate the grace of God, to draw back from the paths of peace, and reject the spirit we once obeyed, leaves us to the apprehension of speedy vengeance, and the perdition of ungodly men. Who can expect, that after such an affront, God should lengthen the opportunity of salvation? Would not any one rather think that this would fill up the measure of his iniquity, that the jealousy of the Lord should grow impatient upon such a provocation, that he should say, "*I will no longer pity nor spare; but this night his soul shall be required of him.*" It is much more reasonable to imagine this, than that he should defer that severity, which needs no new addition of guilt to increase it. When the kingdom of grace has been brought so near to a soul that revolts, what can that soul expect, but the fate of a traitor, to be executed so soon as apprehended. What ground is there for new endeavours, when former attempts have been unsuccessful? What reason have we to expect a second invitation, when we have renounced our subjection to the law of Christ, after we were indeed invited? What probability of a second renovation, when, after having  
been

been washed, we return to our pollution? If God has granted grace, which has not only been sufficient, but also has been really operative, why should that spirit be again restored which we have quenched and grieved, and from which we degenerated and fell? What hope have we of becoming the children of God, when after we were, we render ourselves by our apostacy much rather the children of wrath? It is not impossible we should be redeemed from a temporary bondage to sin; but it is uncertain, and more improbable, that we should enjoy a second time the same advantages. For God is so far from abounding towards those who have not, and then surely so far from administering sufficiency to those who are prodigal of the true riches, that there shall be even that taken from them which they have.

By *unbelief*, we may understand both a renunciation of the faith which was once embraced, and a degeneracy into more lifeless and unaffected apprehensions of what may in the mean time be believed.



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IN scripture, we often find faith mean, not only a certain persuasion of things believed, but an impression of evidence and efficacy, which prepares the heart for performing the covenant of the gospel. *Unbelief* therefore does not always import a plain and absolute denial of all form of godliness, but such a faith, which on account of its weakness is ineffectual. For as the sense may be indisposed for right information, though there be not a total privation; so we may be practically insensible of what we acknowledge to be truth and reason. Thus *unbelief* may be termed that faith which is unable to produce the proper effects of a good conversation.

By *departing from the living God*, we may understand, a declination from the sacred institutions of divine worship. In scripture, God is very often to be interpreted, not essentially, of the very Godhead; but relatively, with respect to us: and we thus sometimes understand by God, his works, his ordinances, and transactions with mankind. Where God is worshipped in the purity of the gospel, he is said to place his

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name;

name; *\*This is my rest, here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.* St. Paul, writing to the believing Corinthians, tells them, that they are *†the temple of the living God*; as he has said of himself, *‡I will dwell in thee, and walk in thee; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

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IT may also be understood, as forsaking the communion and assembly of his church: The church of God being ingrafted in Christ, is mystically united to the Godhead: *§and gave himself*, says the apostle, *to be head over all things to the church*, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. When things sensual supersede the singular reverence and superlative love for the true and invisible God, we then *depart* from him: because we give that religion to things of our own invention, which is peculiarly due to him. It is to worship a god of our own formation; and thus covetousness is stiled idolatry. It is swerving from the duties of christianity, and fulfilling the desires of the body and of the mind. He that violates any com-

\* Psalm cxxxii. 14.

† 2 Corin. vi. 16.

‡ Levit. xxvi. 12.

§ Ephesians i. 22.

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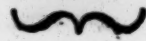


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mand of heaven, that observes not the spiritual offices of life and godliness, *departs* from God.

THAT *unbelief* is therefore the occasion of men falling in the time of temptation, may be easily proved, by demonstrating how faith keeps us immoveable in temptations. If those temptations only happen to us, which are common to all men, it satisfactorily includes the concurrence of the will and power of God to make us ready to every good work. If then we be convinced, that the power and will of God conspire to save us from the wrath to come, by working in us that which is pleasing in his sight ; what more help is necessary that we continue faithful for the present ? when though perhaps we have not the abundance of grace to make virtue so easy and delightful, we have a sufficiency to make it useful and practicable.

IT is a weak courage that cannot endure one assault, when there is assurance of success in the resistance. If God be ready to employ his power to succour those servants who are engaged in trials ; if we ourselves  
persevere



persevere in all things through the assistance of Christ; and if we be sure that the angels of God shall minister to us, and the spirit of God shall guard us, then it will be our natural propensity to serve him, and we shall not faint in ordinary contentions. He has given to believers the spirit of a sound mind, and of power to exercise it, when our original weakness is supplied by a lively faith: and then we have not only the assured expectation, but the experience also of the help of him, who is a merciful and faithful high-priest, and who has all power given to him in heaven and in earth. Certainly we must judge him destitute of sense and reason, who cannot endure one severity; when he knows that by enduring it, he will find that satisfaction and comfort which he can never expect, unless he undergo the Lord's correction. \**No chastening for the present, says the scripture, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby.* If we have assurance of this, to what patience and long-suffering will it

\* Hebrews xii. 11.



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not transport us? What can make us endure affliction, if this consideration cannot, which is grounded upon the eternal truth; that the way of trouble and adversity, is the way to rest and happiness in both worlds; that a wilderness of trials is the passage and direction to an heavenly, as well as an earthly Canaan, a land of peace and tranquility, of ease and enjoyment? God will supply all our wants according to the riches of Christ; he will never leave nor forsake his people; he will be a defence and asylum in the needful time of trouble.

FAITH informs us, that we must vigilantly look for these trials, that we may not be unprepared to receive them. The judgments of God are far from the sight of the ungodly, but the practical believer holds them in his eye. He knows such events will happen, he prepares therefore and provides for them. He fortifies himself against the time of darkness and desolation, knowing that the servants will meet with tribulation. Thus the venerable patriarch being warned of God, provided an ark for the preservation of his house. There

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is no surer means for patient continuance in well-doing, in those capacities and conditions which God has allotted us, than by preparing to meet him in his most wonderful and amazing providences. And as when the antidote is taken, the operation of the poison is prevented; so unbelief is the principal cause of apostacy.

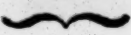
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FAITH substantiates the things of the other life; represents them clearly to the view, and inclines us as if by virtue of a sensible appearance. Such is the force of a certain evidence of the truth of God's threats and promises, recorded in scripture. Our subscription to his wisdom, power, and goodness, secures us from danger, and shelters us from the storms around. It is a kind of perspective, or optic instrument, by which we see things afar off, as if they were near; things that are not yet, as if they were. If then faith sets us within the reach of things as yet unseen, if we pierce to the third Heaven, and view the excellent glory there inhabiting, as Moses viewed Canaan from the top of Mount Pisgah; what then should debar us from



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from that promised land, which our eyes have seen so glorious. Therefore, *unbelief*, or the want of the enlivening properties of faith, is the principal reason why men in the time of temptation fall, departing from the living God. Faith is permanent and habitual; it is not a transient thought or consideration, not like many occasional suggestions, which perhaps never settle in our memory. This can tend no more to perpetuate our religion, than one repast can strengthen us for a tedious journey. What benefit can we enjoy by such apprehensions as are very rarely remembered, though perhaps not absolutely forgotten? There must always be oil in readiness for the lamp, to preserve its light. It is not like a slow memory, long before it can discover what it aims to recollect; but that which presents its object readily, and whose operations occur naturally. When it familiarly represents to us the motives and reason to a spotless conversation, to an innocent demeanour, with the same ease that worldly experience reminds us of the rules and arguments for arranging our temporal affairs. Then it permits not the delusions of sin to obtain an advantage, but by its quickening  
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and enlivening powers, urges us to run the way of Christ's commandments.

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THAT it may be clear, we must establish our faith upon certain principles, and satisfy our minds with convincing arguments. We must confront the reasonableness of our belief with all scruples, doubts, and jealousies. There is nothing more advantageous to confirm our resolutions, than frequently to recall those considerations by which we were first convinced; to think again and again, that our memory may imprint the real images of things upon us, as well as to use our own judgments in all occurrences. Faith has its gradual proportions, as appears from the petition of the disciples to their Lord; \**Lord, increase our faith*; and †*Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief*.

ST. JAMES advises in the case of wisdom, ‡*if any lack it, let him ask in faith, nothing wavering*. §*Let those that stand, take heed lest they fall*; for how we should fall from faith is as easy to be understood, as

\* Luke xvii. 5.

‡ James i. 6.

† Mark ix. 24.

§ 1 Corin. x. 12.

how



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how blessed angels in a state of glory, and happy man, in a state of innocence, should fall. There are very powerful internal suggestions, excited by external temptations, which may easily surprize us; and the lapse of one day may cause that of a second, so long as sin magnifies and enlarges itself.

BUT the consequences of apostacy are very sad. It is the occasion of atheism and infidelity. It is to undervalue the consolations of God. It renders us incapable of any reconciliation. For it is one thing to sin through the frailty of man's nature, and another to sin wilfully. \**He that despised the law of Moses, says St. Paul, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing.* Are the miseries of the next life more tolerable than those of the present? The worst evils that can befall us here, are inconsiderable, are rather com-

\* Hebrews xxviii. 29.

forts and joys, in comparifon to the evils of eternity. It were better indeed to be happy after fuffering, than that affliction fhould fucceed felicity. We muft endure reproofs and chaftifements here, or the frowns and terrors of the Almighty hereafter. And is our time of felf-pleafing fo great, and our age of fuch duration, as we fhould not fear the wrath to come? Having begun in the fpirit, do we think to be made perfect in the flefh? When we have borne the burden and heat of the day, will we leave off, when ready to receive our reward? When we have overcome the greateft difficulties, when our falvation is fo near, fhall we then draw back?

THAT we may not *depart from the living God*, we are directed to *\*hold faft the beginning of our confidence to the end*: and we are fo far *partakers of Chrift*, that longer than we hold faft our faith and integrity, we are not in a ftate of juftification and falvation. For fhould the day of judgment fall upon any one in the commiffion of iniquity, his

\* Hebrews iii. 14.



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own heart will be his judge, and instead of a thousand witnesses against him, whom they have taken in the very act of rebellion and sin. Most certain it is, that in every actual trespass, there is a loss of that actual grace, which is the ornament of the soul, and the wedding-garment in which the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated. And that the wrath of God rests upon a transgressor during the time of his impenitence, is evident from the history of David.

WHAT blasphemy then is it against the pure and holy ways of God, when we are told, that if a man be in Christ, though he be concerned in murder, drunkenness, or adultery, God sees no sin in him! It had been well if these reprobate notions had been confined to the minds that bred them; and happy for them if such suggestions had not encouraged others, as well as the authors of them, to offend.

As daily repentance is a daily duty, without perseverance in it, we cannot obtain absolution. What inconsistency is it, that any one should be stiled a saint, when the Scripture itself assures us, that God re-  
gards

gards not our present holiness, but on account of our continuance in it. Perseverance is so necessary, that otherwise God would be bound to give us life, without the obligation on our part to do his will. A most absurd and irrational supposition; that he should not cease to shew us mercy, yet we should cease to give him the glory. Thus would he be less free than man, who by his creation and dependence is bound to pay him homage. Perseverance is easier than repentance; and if we decline what we are so well fitted for, there is no reason we should be partakers of Christ's righteousness longer than we persevere in our own innocence. Religion is so naturalized and so feasible to men, who having nothing more but to compleat the victory, and to end the combat they have managed with so good success, it is an argument of a pusillanimous and cowardly spirit, to desert that standard, under which they have been so often victorious.

WE should hold fast our confidence, because Christ himself was faithful and constant to the end, from his humble cradle,



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dle to his bitter cross. He was without guile; *which of you accuseth me of sin*, was his challenge to his enemies, to those who sought to entrap and to destroy him. He was obedient to death; he turned not back in his agony; but resisted to blood, when his heart was sorrowful even unto death; he was not dismayed at any terror; but for the joy that was set before him, he went through all his trials patient and spotless, with submission to his father's will and determinate counsel from first to last: he endured the cross, despising the shame; and he is now ready to reward all those that look unto him, who imitate his example, and hold with patience and perseverance to the end. There to crown with life all who are faithful unto death; to make them partakers of himself there; and to receive into the participation of his own joy and glory, them who have held fast the beginning of their confidence stedfast to the end. *\*Therefore consider him that endureth such contradictions of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

\* Hebrews xii. 3.

How

How great is the loss we sustain, and the misery we endure by actual wickedness; either in depriving us of our confidence of hope, or what is worse, rendering that confidence vain. The hope of the gospel is a hope which maketh not ashamed; how then does this consist with an irregular behaviour. If the transgression be but as temporary as the faith of reprobates, it fares with a christian as with a disobedient son, who having done that which his father dislikes, though he fear not being deprived of his inheritance, yet is ashamed to appear in his presence. It shews the danger of degenerating from the just measure of acquired holiness. We have seen the loss sustained by a particular transgression; to fall then for any time from the power of our first renovation, must leave us in a state much more disconsolate.

LET us be exhorted therefore to labour for such a condition as consists with confidence in God; and be careful to persevere in that confidence, because we cannot otherwise be partakers of Christ. How happy is it to have hearts standing fast and trusting in the Lord! How much more to



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be desired, to be under the fostering wing of the Almighty, than to be exposed to the apprehension of his terrifying displeasure! The horror of the transgressor cannot be less than that which seized Jacob in his dream, at \*Bethel. Nor are these disasters only matters of fear and expectation, but we shall see them really in all their pageantry and solemnity of confusion. How comfortable in that moment would be a small portion of hope! Is it not therefore better to assure our hearts beforehand, and hold fast our confidence, by which we are liable neither to fear or disorder? This must be our endeavour, before we can be made partakers of Christ here or hereafter. Let us then lay aside every weight that may hinder or retard us, and the allurements of sin, which so easily beset us; and let us run with patience and perseverance the race that is set before us; let us be careful that we sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto us.

As we have begun in Christ, so let us continue in him. *Ye are they*, †said our

\* Genesis xxviii. 16.

† Luke xxii. 28.

Saviour to his disciples, *which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my father hath appointed unto me.* Let us then run that we may obtain ; and give not over in the middle of the race, but strive until we have reached the goal of eternal life. As we have begun well in sound doctrine and pure religion, so let us make a happy progress, and degenerate not at last into apostacy and folly, into vice and irreligion. Upon the departure of some of his disciples, our blessed Lord proposed this question to the rest, *\*will ye also go away?* to which St. Peter, as the mouth, and in the name of them, replied, *Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* Why then should the love of the world prevail upon us to forego our interest in Christ? why should its gilded allurements entice us into a love of it, and, like the apostate Demas, into a desertion of our Saviour ; and by consequence the confidence and hopes of a blessed immortality? Let neither the powerful assaults and temptations of sin, or the Circæan charms of the world, with all its seducing pleasures, be-

\* John vi. 67.



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tray us to a fordid and fatal compliance; to a departure from Christ; but let us hold fast the beginning of our confidence to the end.

THE Apostle therefore speaks to them who stand, who have sometimes prepared their hearts; he exhorts them to take heed *\*God's works are not in vain*. But because our minds are evil and corrupt, our hearts frail and unstable, too apt to be turned with every wind, deceived with every temptation, let us make it our earnest entreaty to God, that he would confirm us in his faith, and establish us in his truth. And because our wills are irresolute and wavering, our goodness but as the morning clouds, let us supplicate that whatever work he has wrought in us, that we may accomplish and perform it till the day of Christ. He will cover our head in the day of battle, guard us in all spiritual trials and conflicts; he will not permit the terrors or the flatteries of the world to draw us from our obedience to him. He knows our weakness, and the number and

\* 2 Peter ii. 20.

strength

strength of the temptations we perpetually encounter: let us then beseech him not to leave us, *lest there be found in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the Living God.*

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SERMON



## SERMON VIII.

On the SACRAMENTS.

PSALM LXXVI. II.

*Promise unto the Lord your God and keep it.*SERM.  
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**T**HOUGH God has an original right to our whole worship, and we are under every obligation of duty and gratitude to do to the utmost of our ability what is well-pleasing in his sight; yet he expects us to engage ourselves by promise to him, that religion may appear to be our voluntary choice, and the rules of the gospel the most acceptable to our reason. For, though we are antecedently obliged to him on account of our creation, preservation, and redemption, yet vows and promises are of peculiar

use in religion ; drawing the bond of obligation closer, and as they prove the approbation of our judgment, so are they incentives and assistances to piety. He who vows a conformity to the gospel, is supposed to be satisfied with the reasonableness of its rules ; and being his free act, what can induce him to so solemn an engagement against the sense of his own mind ? Fear and compulsion sometimes over-rule the judgment of mankind, and they are encouraged to confess what they do not truly allow ; but where there is no constraint, there in all probability, can be no dissimulation ; and a voluntary declaration generally proves conviction. Thus, he who (besides his natural obligations) promises obedience to the laws of God, confirms the equity of them ; and attests his opinion of their goodness, by freely undertaking to perform them. The sense of his vow will excite him in the exercise of every part of his duty, and urge him to a vigorous and circumspect performance of it, by all the arguments of shame and reproach. Thus Jacob made a vow to serve the Lord in Bethel ; thus king Aza and all Judah, with many of Israel, entered into covenant to seek the  
Lord



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Lord God of their fathers ; and thus David by a solemn oath, promised to keep God's righteous judgments. Not but that they were before, from the sovereign authority of God, invariably bound to serve him, but to provoke them to greater zeal, and more attentive diligence in his worship, they promised obedience. The psalmist might therefore well press those who intend to be religious, to *promise* unto the Lord their God, and keep it.

THE sacraments are holy rites instituted by Christ in the service of God. For though he came to deliver us from that yoke of ceremonies which Moses bound upon the neck of our forefathers ; yet he did not leave his religion denuded of all external and significant rites ; but appointed certain sacred ordinances, which we call sacraments, not only as rules of decency, but as means of grace. He has enjoined all men to receive them and become his disciples. This exposes the ignorance of those who except against Jewish ceremonies as unlawful now in the worship of God ; and who think such carnal ordinances suit not the spiritual dispensation of the gospel.

These

These positive institutions of christianity confute this opinion; and all men, who expect salvation by the merits of Christ, must submit to these sacraments.

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THAT the institution of the sacraments was ordained by Christ, we may learn both from the gospel and \*St. Paul; where we have a particular account of their first establishment. Our Saviour gave †an express commission to his disciples to go and baptize all nations; which they‡ afterwards frequently exercised. And in obedience to the commands of their great master, they were attentive §in *breaking* the bread (the phrase in which this sacrament is expressed).

THOUGH our Saviour instituted other sacred rites for peculiar purposes, and ||particular persons; yet there are only two, in which all men who are christians are concerned, and to which they are strictly obliged neither to neglect them wilfully,

\* 1 Corinthians xi. † Matthew xxviii. 19.

‡ Acts ii. 41.—viii. 12 and 38.—xvi. 15, 33.—xviii. 8.

§ Matthew xxvi. 26, 27, 28.—Luke xxii. 19.

| As imposition of hands, Mark xvi. 18.—Hebrews vi. 1, &c.



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nor inadvertently to omit them. The word *sacrament* is indeed often understood in a large and general sense, for any holy rite or mystery; it is often attributed to whatever a holy thing may signify. In which use of it, many ancient writers have applied it to various ceremonies, as oil, washing of the feet, and the like; on which account the cross is stiled the \**sacrament* of the cross; and the helve with which Elisha recovered the axe out of the water is called the †*sacrament* of wood. Martyrdom‡ is stiled a *sacrament*; and an oath both in sacred and civil authors passes frequently under that name. In this lax sense of the word there may be many sacraments; but if we take it strictly and properly for those sacred rites instituted by Christ, as the necessary means and pledges of salvation, there are only two, baptism and the Lord's supper, being ordained only for that purpose.

THE church of Rome indeed has established confirmation, orders, matrimony, penance, and extreme unction, besides the other two, pretending that they have the

\* Sacramentum Crucis. *Augustine.*

† Sacramentum Ligni. *Tertullian.*

‡ Jerom.

same

same authority, and the same efficacy. But although they were all sacred, and by outward signs import an inward and mysterious signification; yet they were not instituted by Christ, nor are they necessary for all persons. We might with equal reason multiply the number; as an oath is of this nature, and all the parables and metaphors in the gospel, which by outward representations carry an inward and mysterious signification, might be enumerated. Our church retains all that are useful and necessary; but, with the primitive fathers, acknowledges only baptism and the Lord's supper as proper sacraments. For if all the sacraments flowed from the side of our Lord, as they affirm, with water\* and blood only issuing from thence; water as the matter of baptism, and blood as that of the Lord's supper, we may safely conclude that these are the only two.

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UNDER the old law, circumcision and the passover were the only sacraments; and instead of these, Christ has introduced baptism, and the Lord's supper. If the for-

\* John xix. 34.



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mer were sufficient to admit and confirm the Jews in the covenant of God, why may not the latter be sufficient for our christian profession? By baptism our admission into the church is allowed; it is the laver of regeneration by which we are new-born: by the Lord's supper we are nourished, preserved, and grow up in Christ after our regeneration. No other sacraments can be necessary to form the christian, as by one we are admitted, and by the other perfected in Christ. They are sufficient for all the purposes of spiritual life; they are the means and assurances of divine grace, and without them we have no covenant right to salvation.

It cannot be understood, that without the exercise of these sacraments, the Almighty is unable to save mankind; for he is not so limited to the use of means, as not to exert his power and his mercy in extraordinary cases, when through any unavoidable necessity they are not to be used. But they are the common instrumental means of salvation, by which he has promised to convey to us the merits of Christ, and commanded us in this manner to receive them

them. Thus to neglect them wilfully, or to omit them wantonly, is to slight his ordinance, to disregard his mandates, and to hazard manifestly our own salvation.

CHRIST told Nicodemus, that *\*except a man be born again of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven:* which shews the necessity of baptism, as it is the only new birth by that element of which we are capable, when by the washing of water the guilt of sin contracted by our first birth is done away, and a principle of new life is infused into us by the spirit of holiness. Those that are not thus born can have no admittance into the church of Christ. And if baptism be the only door by which we can enter, it sufficiently proves the necessity of that sacrament, as a pledge of our salvation. That the Lord's supper is alike indispensable, we have our Saviour's express assertion; †*Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, there is no life in you.* By this we must understand the eating and drinking the bread and wine

\* John iii. 5.

† John vi. 53.



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in the Eucharist, which was instituted in commemoration of both; so are we here taught that without it we have no life in us, no spiritual life of grace here, nor any hopes of a life of glory hereafter. For though baptism be that holy ordinance by which we are born again, and begotten to this lively hope; yet this is the sacrament by which the seeds of grace, then sown, are cherished and matured to immortality. Here we meet with that living bread, that food of the soul, which nurtures our spiritual life; and which, if withheld, would as surely pine away and decay, as the natural life of the body, were it denied its proper nourishment.

THUS it is a natural inference, that whoever through carelessness, error, or obstinacy, allows himself to neglect either of these sacraments, unless from unavoidable accident, endangers his future felicity. Without the pious observation of these institutions, he has no reasonable claim to the mercies of redemption, or to the privileges of the covenant of grace. As the statutes of christianity so forcibly enjoin them, they

convey an indispensable\* necessity by virtue of the divine precept, which invites us to the use of them. Jesus is our lord and master, and under such characters he challenges our obedience; if we regard him not, he may justly upbraid us, as he did some† of old, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say.* He is our Saviour, who has delivered us from sin, and purchased with his own blood our eternal inheritance; does not a spirit of gratitude then enforce this obligation? Shall he perform so much for us, and shall we reject the exercise of those means by which such mercies are applied and confirmed to us? These are the peculiar badges of the christian religion; what Christ himself has ordained as the appropriate acts of our worship to him. By these we principally distinguish ourselves from other people, and other sects of whatever denomination. The moral duties of the gospel are common to all men, but the sacraments are peculiar to the disciples of Christ. Thus when our profession is discriminated from all others in our con-

\* As the schools say, *Necessitas precepti.* † Luke vi. 46.



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formity to these holy ordinances, we in effect renounce our religion in declining these injunctions, and have little more to distinguish us from Turks and Jews than a better name, and (with shame may it be spoken) a worse practice.

BUT if we consider these sacraments as means of grace, by which the Almighty is pleased in a peculiar manner to apply to us the merits of Christ, and as\* a necessary instrument to convey these mercies, they cannot be omitted without hazarding the salvation of our souls. St. Peter advised his new converts to *†repent and be baptized.* *‡Arise and be baptized*, said Ananias to Saul, upon his conversion to christianity. The first christians were accustomed to break bread §from house to house; and we are yet encouraged by St. Paul to a frequent participation of it; he tells us, ||that the bread which we break, and the cup which we bless, are the communion of the body and blood of Christ.

\*-Necessitate medii. † Acts ii. 38. ‡ Acts xxii. 16.  
§ Acts ii. 46. || I Corin. x. 16.

THE word *sacrament* is not any where used in scripture; but is intended by the church to signify allusion and accommodation, to express some peculiar signs and institutions, which are appointed by God as the means and assurance of grace.

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THE word in its original sense signified a military oath, by which the soldiers bound themselves to their generals to do the duty of their respective stations: and as it was attended with sacred rites, might thence probably derive its appellation. Because the state of a christian is represented in \*scripture as a warfare, and not only †Timothy called upon to fight the good fight of faith, ‡but the generality of christians are excited to put on the whole armour of God to engage in that combat; therefore they might be induced to apply this military term to express their obligation, and thus to represent those sacred mysteries of their religion, by which they at once engaged themselves to the service of God, and expected mercies from him.

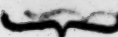
\* 2 Corin. x. 4.—† Timothy i. 18.—‡ Timothy iv. 7.

† 1 Timothy vi. 12.

‡ Ephesians vi. 11.



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THE intent of a sacrament being to convey something to the understanding by sensible representations, to instruct by the eye, and to lead us to spiritual things by the objects of sense; the matter of it must be external and visible, that we may be properly affected by it. It is like a picture which exhibits the face, and thus calls to our remembrance the person who is represented.

THUS in the sacraments, water, bread, and wine, are signs visible to every eye, by which we are transported to the thoughts of what they are ordained to represent. They are not mere empty ceremonies, but significant rites, which are appointed to denote an internal and spiritual grace. By which grace we may understand some peculiar favour bestowed on us (particularly by the death of Christ) because it tends to the welfare of our inward man: such are the graces of regeneration and forgiveness of sins, which in baptism are appropriated to us; and those assistances of the holy spirit, of which we partake in the celebration of the Lord's supper, and are benefits more immediately respecting the good of our souls.

BUT

BUT an external sign of internal grace is not sufficient to constitute a sacrament; it must therefore be of divine institution; because God alone can bestow those graces, which the sacrament is made to represent and seal. And if Christ has the sole power of conferring grace, all the efficacy of the sacraments must rest upon him, and must be ordained by him, to produce the expected effect. Sacraments work not by any natural force, but by virtue of the divine institution; and are only, and altogether, what God by his ordinance is pleased to render them. And as the two sacraments of the Old Testament were of divine original, so were the two sacraments of the new; which were both ordained by Christ, and consecrated by him to two great and important ends, as the means and assurance of grace.

IN the due use of the sacrament, so much of that favour is conveyed to us; as at the time is useful; the pardon of sin, acceptance with God, and strength to perform what is required of us. This is the only instrument of communicating such favour; not a natural, but a moral instru-

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ment, by which God has, upon certain conditions, annexed the exhibition of it, and which therefore the outward elements most certainly convey, to all who are piously disposed to receive them. It is thus that the sacraments are distinguished from other ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies, which are only as rules of external order and decency; not as articles of faith, but as a preservation of unity. Thus by baptism we receive the Holy Ghost for the renewal of our nature; on which account *\*the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost* are connected together by St. Paul. And thus by the Lord's supper, we receive new supplies to enable us to a more acceptable performance of our duty, by which we are *†made to drink into one spirit*; and by which are communicated such degrees of spiritual consolation, which as much invigorate and enliven the powers of the soul, as wine exhilarates the faculties of the body. St. Peter reasonably asserted that baptism *‡does now save us*, when §Christ had said, *he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved*; and ||St. Paul

\* Titus iii. 5.

† 1 Corin. xii. 13.

‡ 1 Peter iii. 21.

§ Mark xvi. 16.

|| 1 Cor. x. 16.

might

might well call the eucharistical bread and wine the communion of Christ's body and blood, when \*he himself thus pronounced them. If therefore by one we are placed in a state of salvation, and by the other confirmed in it, they may properly be considered as instruments of grace, and as real exhibitions of what they signify and represent.

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THE sacraments are pledges to assure us of, as well as instruments to convey to us, the grace of God. This is the other end of their institution. They give us sufficient assurance that all those favours are communicated to us in the use of them, which they were assigned to convey. As his graces are invisible, that we may have a surer foundation for our faith in his promises, he has left the sacraments in the hands of his ministers, as an earnest deposited to make them available. He is not contented to bestow only a general offer of grace, but in condescension to our weakness, he has given us visible pledges for the confirmation of it; that in the use of one, we are assured of being partakers of the other.

\* Matthew xxvi. 26. 28.



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THE Apostle, in relation to baptism, appeals to his Romans as an allowed principle, that this was a token of their interest in Christ's death; *\*Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?* Our Saviour tells us, that in the participation of the other, we may rest assured of the blessings purchased by his body and blood; *†Who so eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* Thus the sacraments are a ground of confidence in us, that we really receive what they represent; that, as certainly as we are baptised, our sins are washed away; and, that our souls are as surely strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.

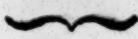
BUT they are pledges of these blessings only to the worthy receivers; for, as they convey grace but under certain qualifications, so they can give an assurance of it to none but to those who come with those dispositions required for the due reception of either sacrament.

\* Romans vi. 3. 4.

† John vi. 54.

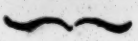
THE waters of baptism will not wash away their guilt who offer themselves without repentance and faith; neither will the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper contribute to their spiritual life, who eat and drink without a due sense of their sins, a charitable regard to their neighbour, and a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ. To these they cannot be any security of the grace they were otherwise intended to exhibit. The covenant, of which they are the seals, is conditional; and as we must perform our part to be partakers of its mercies, so from thence only can we raise any assurance that they are conferred.

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FROM this account of the sacraments we may observe, what little reason the Church of Rome has for adopting those other five into the number. For though orders, matrimony, and the like, are very useful and convenient for certain persons, and in certain cases, for the promotion of good and prevention of evil; and so, in a comprehensive sense, may be stiled things sacred and holy mysteries; yet, they were not instituted by Christ as necessary instruments of grace, much less are they required  
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of all persons indiscriminately in order to their salvation. Some of them are only different states of life allowed by the scriptures, but not of general importance; and thus they want many requisites to denominate them, truly and properly, sacraments.

NEITHER may the rites and ceremonies of the church be termed sacraments, as some have thoughtlessly objected; for they are confessed to be of human institution, contributing only to decency of order and godliness of discipline; and to rouse the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God, by some visible and peculiar signification. But Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only sacraments of the new covenant, and which therefore it is the duty of every christian with attentive reverence to regard, that using them as the means of grace now, they may be instrumental to lead us to a state of glory hereafter.

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## SERMON IX.

### On the SACRAMENT of BAPTISM.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

*Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

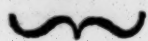
**F**ROM the general consideration of the nature of a sacrament, we may descend to a particular view of the parts of it, the sign and the thing signified; one, external and visible, to be seen by the eye; the other, internal and spiritual, to be received by faith. Thus, we may begin with baptism, which being the sacrament of our admission into the church, and as first to be received, should be first understood. The commission

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commiffion of our Saviour to his difciples, therefore was, to baptize *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoft.*

To baptize is to wafh with water ; which fuggelts, that the fign of this facrament is water. This, on account of its natural faculty of cleanfing, is a fit fymbol of purification ; and for this reafon it has been ufed by all ages and countries for that purpofe. The heathens initiated perfons into their myfteries by certain wafhings ; and the Jews received their profelytes in the fame manner. Natural Jews, it is faid, were baptized as well as circumcifed ; and our Saviour thought fit to continue it as the rite of initiation into his church. He was himfelf baptized with water by John the Baptift,\* leaving an example of his own institution. And from the praftice of his difciples, after his commiffion to them to baptize, it is evident that the element of water was what they ufed for that purpofe. Philip and the Eunuch† went down into a certain water near to which they were paffing, that the

\* Matthew iii. 16.

† Acts viii. 38.

latter

latter might be baptized. \*Peter, before he ordered Cornelius and his companies, being baptized in the name of the Lord, demanded of those of the circumcision that came with him, whether any man could forbid water, that these should not be baptized. This unquestionably proves, that this institution of our Saviour was a water baptism, and justifies our church in declaring water to be the visible sign in this sacrament. The Papists have however added oil, salt, and spittle, as essential to this sacrament, perverting the institution of Christ. All, therefore, who are admitted into the church of Christ must be received with this ceremony of water, that they may be washed from the guilt and pollution of sin.

IN what manner this water is to be applied has created difference of opinion; some requiring the baptized person to be dipped, and washed; others think the sprinkling of water sufficient, and the washing of one part enough for the whole.

\* Acts x. 47, 48.



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IN the primitive church, immersion was almost the constant and universal custom ; because it was most symbolical of the great ends and effects of baptism, those of dying to sin, and rising to newness of life. They were best represented by this ceremony, and therefore at first generally used ; at the same time the warmth of the climate, and the age of the greatest part of those who were baptized, favouring this practice. They sunk the person baptized three times under water, to signify their faith in the three persons of the trinity, or to represent the death, burial, and resurrection of our Saviour, together with his continuance three days in the grave. Although this practice was very significant, yet it was perverted by heretics, who used this trine immersion to denote the persons in the trinity to be three distinct substances : which was the doctrine of the Arians. The church was then contented to immerge but once, which would sufficiently express the mysteries of baptism. The diving under water would set forth the death and burial of Christ, and the coming out his resurrection ; in conformity also to this, our death unto sin and rising to righteousness. This single immersion

immersion would express the unity of the godhead, while the trinity of persons would be sufficiently denoted by the parties receiving baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Though immersion was the common practice in those days, yet they did not consider sprinkling as unlawful ; particularly in cases of necessity, of weakness, danger of death, \*or where there could be no convenient place to immerge. It is on this account, that immersion is now generally disused in these parts of the world, and sprinkling substituted instead of it ; because the tender infants could not be dipped in water in these cold northern climates without evident danger to their health, if not to their lives. In this, therefore, as in other cases (God requiring mercy rather than sacrifice, especially considering that the principal ends of baptism are attained, and the mystical effects of it as truly, though not as plainly represented by sprinkling as by dipping the body in water) this indulgence to infants is permitted in the colder countries, and sprinkling becomes the common practice.

\* St. Cyprian, Epist. lxxvi. ad Magn. p. 153.



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Our church, indeed, in conformity to the ancient custom, first recommends immersion or dipping, where the strength of the infant will bear it ; but as it allows the use of sprinkling to the weakness of children, it has principally prevailed, and become in a manner the sole rite of baptism.

This practice indeed is not altogether without authority, as is intimated in holy writ ; thus Ezekiel introduces God speaking concerning the times of the Messias, *\*that he would sprinkle clean water upon them, and they should be clean from all their filthiness, and from all their idols.* This is applied by St. Cyprian to this subject. Mention is made by the † *Apostle of the blood of Christ, and of the blood of sprinkling.* Thus in St. Peter also, *the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*, seems to be an allusion to this baptismal rite. It is evident that the Apostles themselves administered baptism by sprinkling as well as dipping ; for though we may with reason ‡ suppose that Lydia and her household were dipped, because they were converted by a river's side, yet we read of

\* Ezekiel xxxvi. 25. † Hebrews xii. 24. ‡ Acts xvi. 13. 15.

whole families baptized in their own houses, particularly \*of the jailor and his household at the hour of midnight, which could not conveniently have been managed but by sprinkling. It is also very probable that the three thousand converts baptized in consequence of St. Peter's sermon on the †same day it was delivered, and in the place where they were assembled, were received into the church in this manner; otherwise it would have required another place, and a longer time. What reason is there, but that, as in the other sacrament, a spoonful of wine is as significative as a greater quantity, so in this, a handful of water should be as significative as a whole river. It is not the quantity more of one than of the other, which adds virtue to either sacrament, but the Holy Spirit of God that gives the efficacy to both.

The manner of applying the water is under no command of Christ, nor any where determined in the Scriptures. The church therefore makes the application of it discretionary, whether it be by dipping or

\* Acts xviii. 8.—1 Cor. i. 14. 16.—Acts xvi. 33.

† Acts ii. 41.



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sprinkling. As belonging to the ceremony of baptism it is to be regulated by charity; and where the weakness of the party baptized will not safely bear one, from a sense of tenderness to the infant, should be used the other; and the latter being now the common practice in these colder climates, justifies the rite of sprinkling, and has made it the prevailing custom in these parts of Christendom.

BUT though the manner of application be left discretionary, yet the words of administration are not so arbitrary and indeterminate. Every person is to be baptized *in the name of the Father; and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. These words are never to be omitted, lest the baptism be rendered invalid and ineffectual. In the account we have from Scripture of the administration of this sacrament, both by the Apostles and by others, \*it is represented that they baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and hence an objection is raised against the necessity of this form. But the history of St. Luke being only a summary account of the acts of the

\* Acts ii. 38.—viii. 16.—x. 48.—xix. 5.

Apostles

Apostles, we cannot expect every minute particular of the transactions of those times. It was sufficient for him to announce the use only of such a practice. As this was the form delivered by Christ, it may be reasonably concluded that baptism was not administered in the name of Jesus only; but that he being the immediate author of that religion into which these baptisms were made, his name is there mentioned, to denote their admission into that religion, and making profession of every part of that faith which Jesus taught. It is not there said that this solemn form was not used; but is either expressive of the authority or command of Christ, or the general design of baptism, which is engrafting christian disciples into the mystical body of Christ. One of the most ancient writers of \*the church has affirmed, that baptism in his time was administered in the name of the three persons. However therefore it may be expressed in the short account given us of the first baptism; yet, it cannot be doubted but that they administered in the form prescribed by Christ, *baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

\* Justin Martyr.



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By these words we are to understand on the part of the minister, that what he does, is not of himself, but in the name or power of, and by commission from the blessed Trinity. It is therefore of the same validity as if God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost should baptize, as it is in their name, their power, and their authority. With regard to the person baptized, it is an explicit acknowledgment of each person in the Trinity, by which he professes to believe in God the Father who made him, in God the Son who redeemed him, and in God the Holy Ghost who sanctifies him; and is in effect a declaration of his whole creed. As he thus acknowledges these three, so does he deliver himself to be taught by them on the mysteries of his religion. To be baptized in the name of Paul, is to establish our faith in him in opposition to all others: to be baptized in the name of the Trinity, is to dedicate ourselves to their direction, and to receive for infallible truth whatsoever they teach. And not only to receive their instructions, but to be governed by them; to be a willing disciple of this blessed Trinity, and an obedient servant to all their commands. Which if the per-

son baptized perform sincerely, he is intitled to, and has the assurance of, that grace which God has annexed to this holy sacrament.

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WHY the grace which is signified by the ceremony of washing is termed internal and spiritual, has been before explained. The grace itself is that peculiar favour conveyed personally to the baptized in this sacrament, a death unto sin and regeneration unto righteousness.

SIN must be subdued, before the contrary quality can be introduced. By Baptism we receive strength to mortify it; are rescued from the power, and consequently delivered from the punishment of it. To live to sin, is to be under the dominion of it, a slave to lust and corrupt inclinations, and subject both to the commands and penalties of it: so contrariwise, to die to sin, is to abandon its service, nor allow it to reign within us; to be liberated both from its power and guilt. This is the effect of baptism, as asserted by St. Paul\*. *We are*

\* Romans vi, 4.



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*buried with him, says he, by baptism into death; and, \*ye are buried with him in baptism; where he alludes to the ancient custom of immersing the person baptized; by which was represented Christ's death for us, and our death unto sin, being by this figurative death freed from sin. St. Peter exhorts the Jews to be baptized for this very purpose†.*

THIS is the first part of the grace received in baptism; the second is a regeneration unto righteousness. In baptism we receive strength not only to subdue sin, but to walk in righteousness. A new principle is given us, and the christian is no longer moved by the will of the flesh, but by the spirit of Christ, which sanctifies and renews his nature in such a measure, as to become a new man in heart and mind. Not that any physical substance is created in us, but a new disposition, a new inclination, and new powers are infused within us from above; which are different from those which we possess from our carnal nativity. The ancient custom of baptism suggested

\* Colossian ii. 12.

† Acts ii. 38.

this renovation of mind ; that *\*as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also, who are baptized, should walk in newness of life.* † *Ye are also risen with him, risen out of the water in baptism in conformity to Christ's rising from the grave.* Our Saviour calls it ‡ *the sacrament of the new birth*, and St. Paul, § *the labor of regeneration* ; and adds to it, *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, by which the holy spirit is conferred for the renovation of our nature, and to capacitate us for the purposes of piety and virtue.

THAT this collation of the spirit is a privilege of baptism, we may learn from St. Peter||, where he advises his new converts to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, that they may receive the Holy Ghost. We read not only of the miraculous gifts of the spirit bestowed in baptism for the edification of the church, but of his sanctifying graces also conferred, for the spiritual advantage of the baptized persons themselves. It has ever been the doctrine

\* Romans vi. 4.    † Colossians ii. 12.    ‡ John iii. 5.

§ Titus iii. 5.    || Acts ii. 38.



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of the catholic church, \*that the waters of baptism wash away our sins; and that by them is communicated through the spirit a new principle of holiness. If all that are baptized, do not find these blessed effects, it is not from any insufficiency of divine grace conferred in this sacrament, but from the infidelity of men, and the negligence of their promises. They regard not the conditions of their baptismal vow, and thus lose the grace and favour transferred to them in this sacrament: for as St. Peter tells us, that which saves us in baptism, is not merely the outward washing of water, but *the answer of a good conscience towards God*†; we must therefore perform the terms, before we can be partakers, of this covenant.

BECAUSE we are by nature born in sin, the necessity of observing this sacrament very evidently appears. Although this truth has been frequently denied, yet it has ever been acknowledged and bewailed by the best of men. David confessed, that he

\* Acts xxii. 16.—1 Corinthians xii. 13.

† 1 Peter iii. 21.

was shapen in wickedness, \*and in sin, says he, *did my mother conceive me. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean†*, says Job. ‡St. Paul felt a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and leading him captive to the law of sin and death. The ingenuity of every man will lead him to confess, that those seeds of sin are rooted in his nature, which incline him so strongly to the commission of evil. This root of bitterness sprung from our first parents, who corrupted by their transgressions the whole race of mankind; and derived the contagion to all their posterity. §By one man sin entered into the world; and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. In the loins of these first parents we became guilty, and by this original corruption being children of disobedience, we are ||by nature the children of wrath, liable to the just indignation of our heavenly Father, and obnoxious to all the punishments due, as well to our original, as actual, transgressions. And though the justice of this sentence may be impeached,

\* Psalm li. 5. † Job xiv. 4. ‡ Romans vii. 23.

§ Romans v. 12. || Ephesians ii. 3.

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and objections may be raised against this doctrine, yet as it is supported by evident proof from scripture, it gives us but too melancholy a prospect of that miserable state, in which we are all born into the world; and convinces us of Christ's love, in providing means to help us out of this wretched and forlorn condition. He has ordained baptism to cleanse us from sin, and to save us from death and destruction; by the exercise of which ceremony he gives us strength to enable us to free ourselves from that servile and dangerous state; by this the old man is buried, and the new man is raised up.

By our natural generation, we are born in sin, and consequently the children of wrath; but by baptism we are regenerated, and are consequently rendered the children of grace; intitled to all the privileges and benefits which are conveyed by it, becoming inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Such is the right and advantage belonging to these children of grace, \* *who are*

\* 1 Corinthians xii. 13. — Romans viii. 14, 15.

*baptized*

*On the Sacrament of Baptism.*

*baptized into one body, by one spirit*; and such are the favours conferred in the use of this holy ceremony. But though these blessings are promised and tendered to all, yet as this promise is conditional, something must be done on our part to render us capable of them; many services are to be observed, and many duties performed, to contribute to the due administration of this sacrament. Baptism is the seal of the covenant in which these benefits are signed and confirmed, on the part of God; but there are yet some conditions required to be performed by us, to capacitate us for a full benefit of this baptismal grace. Though our Saviour tells us, *\*that he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved*; and of which the preservation of Noah and his family in the ark, and the safe passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, were types and figures; and to assure us of our salvation by the waters of baptism; yet that they might be salutary and profitable, and that we may reap all the great advantages intended by it, we must, either in our own persons, or in the

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\*Mark xvi. 16.

persons



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persons of others, fit ourselves for the due reception of this sacrament by a serious repentance, a hearty renunciation of sin, and a solemn engagement to lead our lives in the practice of piety, of virtue, and of charity.

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## SERMON X.

On the SACRAMENT of the LORD'S  
SUPPER.

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JOHN VI. 53, 54.

*Then Jesus said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*

*Whosoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

**T**HAT the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not a mere commemorative feast, in which we are only to celebrate the remembrance of Christ's death and passion, but

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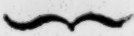

but that it is also instrumental to convey to the pious communicant several blessings, and to invigorate his faint endeavours, is as undeniable as its first institution. It is this which chiefly nourishes our spiritual life, and actuates the divine powers of our soul; and whoever neglects this food, can no more expect the soul should perform its offices, than the body, when deprived of its necessary sustenance. Every grace may here feast itself, and refresh its faint virtue with suitable entertainment; our faith confirms and improves its weak and slender efficacy; our hope is animated and enlarged; and our charity is enkindled to a more vigorous flame, encouraged by the example of that unbounded love we there commemorate.

IT is usual among the sacred writers to mention the parts separately, when they mean to express the whole. Thus heaven and earth signify the whole frame of the world; the elders, high-priests, and scribes in the gospel, signify the Sanhedrim, or the great consistory of the Jews; because it was composed of such distinct orders of men. Thus the flesh and blood of Christ expresses his body, because the body consists

sists of such parts. Though there is a peculiar reason for this disjunction, being separated to denote the violent death of Christ, that his flesh and blood are to be parted, his body to be broken, and his blood to be shed. The bread and the cup are here represented as symbols, to represent their separation at his death.

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THIS, it may be observed, annihilates the popish doctrine of concomitance, or of the body and blood of Christ given together in the bread, which is pleaded by them as a sufficient excuse for refusing the cup to the laity. By such administration, this sacrament loses the peculiar efficacy of its institution.

THE words of the text can neither afford the slightest argument for their doctrine of transubstantiation. It is truly unreasonable to assert contrary to the evidence of sense, to which Christ so often appeals for the truth of his miracles, that these expressions are to be taken in a strict and literal sense, when they will bear another and more rational meaning. It may be as justly urged, that Christ is truly a rock, a vine, and a



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door, because he thus styles himself, as that the bread and wine are his natural body and blood. The efficacy and virtue of a sacrament depend not on the nature of the subject itself, but on the nature of the institution; and works not by its own natural power, but by the force of that virtue which is superadded to, and impressed on it by a divine appointment. Thus to confine these expressions to so forced a construction against the reason of man, is both absurd and dangerous, and will rather ferment suspicion in our creed, than increase our faith. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, as in the words of the text, are to be interpreted in a spiritual sense, to feed on him by faith, in the participation of those symbols, by which he is represented in this holy sacrament.

ALTHOUGH the sacrament was not instituted at the delivery of this injunction; yet not only now, but at other times, Christ spake by way of anticipation; as is plain from his discourse on baptism to Nicodemus, before it was appointed as a  
standing

standing rite that all mankind should be baptized.

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As in every secular undertaking there are some qualifications required for the better discharge and performance of it ; and as a prudent man, before he engages in any business, enquires into the strength and skill of his own abilities, or into whatever may be necessary to bring it to a successful issue ; so it is the part of every pious man, in the discharge of any duty, to examine himself whether he has those qualifications which are requisite for the more acceptable performance of those things, which God has made indispensable instances of obedience, and the necessary means of salvation. Every religious duty has some peculiar affection to recommend it to him ; and that disposition which makes faith acceptable, will not alone consecrate charity. If he intend to pray, and if he would obtain the success of his prayers, he must examine his piety and devotion ; whether he has that confidence in God, that fervency of spirit, and that purity of life, which are necessary to recommend his petitions. As this ought to be his care in every religious duty ; so

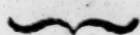
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more especially inquisitive and critical should he be, when about to receive this sacrament, the most sublime duty of christianity, the compendium of religion, the highest exercise of faith, and the strongest engagement to charity.

THE primitive christians always prepared a feast preceding this sacrament, which they called, \*a feast of charity; where every one brought, according to his ability, provisions to furnish a common table; eating promiscuously together what was there prepared, without any regard to property or quality; no man claiming any part as his own, nor any superiority more honourable than another.

THIS was an excellent introduction to that sacrament, which was instituted as a remembrance of the death of Christ, as a federal rite by which God and man enter into covenant with each other, and as an engagement to brotherly love.

\* Cœna nostra de nomine rationem sui ostendit, vocatur enim *Αγάπη*, id quod dilectio penes Græcos est.

THE

THE danger of neglecting this sacrament is clearly intimated in the words of the text. The flesh of Christ which he gave for the life of the world cannot quicken and revive those who do not receive it ; and what reason can be offered why the neglect of this sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not as dangerous as the neglect of the other sacrament of Baptism. Both are duties equally required and enjoined by the same authority. Baptism is given indiscriminately to all infants, born of christian parents, by virtue of the covenant of grace, because the promise is made to them and to their children ; but the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as it requires our explicit assent to, and belief of, all the articles of our faith ; and as it is a solemn renewal of our baptismal vow, supposes a competent understanding and judgment ; and is administered to none but such as are of sufficient age, and can give a reasonable account of their faith.

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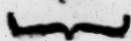
WE may gather the danger of neglecting this sacrament, from what was threatened to the Jews who would not celebrate the passover. God \*told Israel at the institu-

\* Exodus xii. 15.



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tion of this feast, that seven days they should eat unleavened bread, even the first day they should put away leaven out of their houses; and no less than total excision was the threatened punishment annexed to the neglect of this ordinance of the passover. This was a fore and terrible sentence, that the transgressors should be deprived of all those blessings God had promised to their fathers.

THE duties of humility, temperance, justice, and charity, though it be true that they are commanded by Christ, yet they are enforced by other motives also; even natural religion teaches and recommends them, and may therefore be practised without any particular regard to the injunction of Christ. But this sacrament has only his statute to prescribe and exact it. Nature gives us no light of this, neither will the conscience of any man, but the conscience of a true christian, accuse his neglect of it.

As the bonds both of duty and gratitude oblige us to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, it is not every excuse will justify our absence: and the reasons ought to be  
very

very good, when the obligations are so cogent, and the neglect so dangerous. The excuses of those in the \*parable were not admitted, who, when invited to the supper, pleaded that the necessity of their secular concerns deterred them. One had bought a piece of ground, which prevented his attendance; another had bought five yoke of oxen; a third had married a wife. But, instead of accepting their evasive plea, the Lord resented it as an affront; he was exasperated at their conduct, invited other guests, and resolved that none of those who were bidden should taste of his supper.

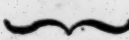
LET not, from this example, every secular concern (light in comparison with that eternal weight of glory which is reserved for the pious soul) let not every empty trifle seduce us to neglect this important charge, subject ourselves to the divine displeasure, and be deprived of all those blessings which are promised to the diligent and worthy communicant.

THAT there is an union between Christ and his church, is the ancient and acknow-

\* Luke xiv. 16.



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ledged doctrine of christians ; and it appears from the authority of scripture, that our union to Christ, consists in being true members of his church, in a mutual love betwixt Christ and believers, and in being actuated by the same spirit. No particular christian has any union to Christ, but as he is united to the society of christians ; because it is founded on his relation to that body, of which Christ is the head. It was the intention of our Lord, not merely to benefit some individual persons, but to erect a church. It was his design to combine all his disciples into a public society ; to unite them by holy mysteries ; and to engage them to a mutual discharge of all christian offices, by which the whole body might edify itself in love.

THE evidence of our union to Christ, then, is in our communion with the christian church. This is plain from those similitudes by which the scripture represents this relation. If Christ be the head, the church is his body : if Christ be the shepherd, the church is his flock ; and every

\* 1 Corinthians v. 12,

true christian by being a member of one, and a sheep of the other, partakes of his influence, and is entitled to his protection. It was for his church alone that he designed all his gracious undertakings, and to which belong the blessed effects of his redemption. How safe soever some may imagine themselves, who were never baptized or never incorporated into the church of Christ, or who are estranged from the body of christians by a voluntary separation, or whatever other principles of union they may fancy and depend upon, the scripture will assure them they are fatally mistaken. There may be some hope of the most distempered and ulcerated member, while it is united to the body, it is more than probable it may be healed again ; but there can be no hope of that member which is actually separated and divided from the body. If the merit of Christ's death respects only his church, and we cannot be united to Christ, nor partake of the virtue of his sufferings, but in the communion of saints ; then it is necessary to be joined to the society of christians, and we must be members of the body, if we expect benefit from the head. We cannot presume to prescribe bounds to infinite  
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mercy ; to define how or in what manner God may deal with those who never were enlightened by the power of the gospel, never were received into the covenant of grace. For *what have we to do*, says the Apostle, *to judge them that are without ; them that are without*, says he, *God judgeth* ; at his tribunal alone they stand. But we cannot for a moment doubt, that great allowances will be made for invincible ignorance ; yet on christian principles it cannot be determined. We must leave them to the unlimited goodness of a gracious God ; but with respect to us, who lay claim to covenanted mercies, we must comply with the terms on which they are established. Thus he who would partake of the merits of Christ's death, must be in communion with the christian church.

BUT because since christianity is become the religion of nations, there are many who only make a mere profession of Christ, that in the communion of christians there are bad as well as good ; the church is therefore in scripture compared to a field, in which tares vegetate as well as wheat ; to a net cast into the sea, which gathereth  
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of every kind. To unite us therefore to Christ, there is required more than a visible and external communion with the rest of his members.

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CHRIST's love to his church is eminently displayed in his dying for it. \*He is that good shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep. When the Apostle represents the greatest expression of his love to his church†, he instances his death.

OUR love to Christ will shew itself primarily in an inward awe and reverence. To consider him as our lord and master, we are to treat him with honour and respect. Not to confine these religious and honourable thoughts within our own breast, but manifest it by outward acts, and testify our affection to Christ by a conformity to his will. Thus we must carefully obey, not only those laws which are most agreeable to our temper and inclination, which best concur with our own temporal interest and convenience; but, with David, we must have respect to *all his commandments*.

\* John x. . . † Ephesians v. 25.—Romans v. 6.

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Among which, and a most important injunction it is, is the reception of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. This he has purposely commanded us to observe, as a never-failing remembrance of his death, the noblest instance of divine philanthropy. We are again and again exhorted to be mindful of all the duties which our Saviour has enjoined his disciples, and not unfrequently the celebration of this sacrament.

THE necessity and advantage of frequent communion is great : for if without feeding on the sacred symbols of Christ's body and blood we cannot ordinarily receive remission of our sins, nor renew the assistances of the spirit of God ; and if these are such blessings which he thought worthy of his life to purchase ; we require no other arguments often to engage us to eat this bread, and to drink this cup, when we stand in daily need of the divine succour and forgiveness.

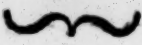
ARE we apprehensive of our frequent failings, and the melancholy consequences of our sins ; how odious they are in the  
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sight of God, and how fatal to ourselves? Are we sensible of the happiness of God's favour; how blessed he is whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered? Then will our interest, as well as our duty, equally inform us of the necessity of frequenting the holy table, and communicating in this service. Are we conscious of our spiritual weakness and decay; how often we tire and faint in our pursuits of good, in our progress to heaven? And if we are sensible that the remembrance of Christ's death is our duty, that it is of important use to us in our christian warfare, all objections and excuse will vanish before us. We know how roving and inconstant are our minds, that the entertainments of sense, the pleasures of the body, and the hurry of worldly business, are too apt to divert our thoughts from more serious meditations, and to wear away the impressions of religion.

WE must understand, that the celebration of the Lord's supper admirably serves to the publication of our faith in the death of Christ; that we believe him to be the  
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Saviour of the world, and that it is by virtue of his sacrifice that we expect the favour of heaven. It is one of the distinguishing rights of our religion; the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, and the invocation of the name of Christ, being the proper and peculiar institutions of christianity; and in the use of them we publish our christian opinions. The rest of our religion is in common with the tenets of others, and little else but the principles of natural religion refined. Particular services were instituted by Christ himself, and are practised by no other modes or denominations of religion in the world.

By our celebration of this sacrament therefore, we publish our faith in Christ; that we acknowledge him as the captain of our salvation, under whose banner we have enlisted; that though the cross was a stumbling block to the Jews, and appeared as foolishness to the Greeks, yet christians are not only not ashamed of, but glory in a crucified Saviour. Thus we make a public declaration of our principles, an open attestation of christianity.

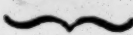
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IT cannot indeed be denied that we have need of frequent monitors of our faith in Christ. Too many live as though they had no such principle ; and our Saviour himself doubts, whether the Son of Man, when he comes a second time, shall find faith on the earth. And it is true, that even the best of us do not always act under the influence of such a persuasion ; but walk rather by sight than faith, by the measures and motives of this world than by the hopes and rewards of the next.

IT was the fault of the apostle St. Thomas, that he was deficient in faith, that he did not readily believe the resurrection of Christ. And though in compassion to the weakness of Thomas, Jesus gave him the satisfaction he required, by which means our faith in Christ is confirmed beyond all possibility of rational doubt, yet he declares it a nobler act of faith in those that see not, and yet believe. And if it be for the commendation and advantage of christians, to confess Christ before men, we must evidently declare it in the use of this sacrament, which is a lively representation of



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what Christ suffered, when he made his soul a sacrifice for sin.

THE new covenant was founded in Christ's death; it was by his sufferings that God and man were reconciled, and entered into mutual engagements. And when by the consecrated bread and wine we are made partakers of his body and blood, it is of all those benefits which God has engaged himself to bestow in the new covenant.

BUT we must remember, that the mere eating and drinking the consecrated elements of bread and wine, will not infallibly convey to us either the remission of our sins, or the assistance of God's spirit; for why then need there any preparation? Forgiveness of sins is conditionally promised by God upon our repentance; the assistance of his grace upon our virtuous endeavours; eternal life upon our sincere obedience. Whoever repents not; whoever makes no progress in virtue; whoever obeys not the commands of God, can expect none of these blessings, It only then remains that  
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we hasten to qualify ourselves with such due tempers and requisite dispositions of mind, that we may be accepted as welcome and worthy guests at this holy solemnity; and fail not to approach the marriage feast with the wedding garment.

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VOL. II.

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SERMON



# SERMON XI.

On the GENERAL FAST,

Ordered to be observed on FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 1793

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ISAIAH XXVI. 9.

*When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

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TO explore the secrets of cabinets, or to trace the concatenations of political causes, which direct the helm of a great state; to justify or to condemn the operations of government, however nearly they may be allied to individual security, certainly is not the province of the preacher. It is his office to inculcate the plain, the humble, the practical duties of piety and morality;

morality; to teach obedience to God, and charity to men; and not to fan the flame of contention, or provoke the hastiness of opinion, by discussing abstract political questions, which suit neither the sanctity of the place, nor the holiness of the purpose for which we assemble. There are other places and other times better suited to the deliberation of such subjects.

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WE are now, however, called upon by the executive power of the kingdom to *humble ourselves before the mighty hand of God*; that we may avert the impending consequences of our public and private sins; and to implore his pardon for our past offences, with a sincere resolution of future amendment.

THAT God exerts the same authority over states as over individuals, is evident from the history of the Jews; in which we find that he dealt with them both personally and collectively, as the situation of their affairs required; and as the frequency and enormity of their sins demanded his intercession. He often promised them the blessings of his favour and protection for the

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preservation of their government, and for the happiness of the people: that if they would submit to the conditions which he imposed on them, and turn from the evil of their ways, he would restore them to the plenitude of his paternal care, and to the enjoyment of peace and security.

THIS will sufficiently assure us, that with the same humiliation before God, undissembled repentance of our sins, and earnest resolution of amendment, the same merciful protector will enable us to overcome the power of our enemies, with which we are at present threatened. Not that we are to flatter ourselves with the same peculiar favour of Providence, which so wonderfully attended the government of that people; for what was personally applied to them, must be figuratively applied to us: otherwise we impeach both the nature of eternal justice and mercy, as well as violate the rights of mankind. We must not judge of the fate of kingdoms from God's administration of the Jewish commonwealth, for it would be equally injurious to religion and to government. The doctrine, for instance, which teaches that  
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God, in the common administration of the world, punishes the posterity for the crimes of their forefathers, was a dispensation peculiar only to the Jews ; but in the present disposition of things would intrench on the divine attributes of justice and mercy. Under the theocracy of the Jews, both the king and the people were superintended by the immediate and extraordinary providence of God ; their religious and civil society were incorporated, and equally subject to temporal rewards and punishments. It would be dangerous and delusive therefore to regulate our ideas of God's dealing with the present world, from the same plan of his administration of the Jewish ; for we are now governed not by an extraordinary, but by a common providence. It were indeed then in some degree just and necessary, that the crimes of private men should be expiated only by the desolation of the state, because it involved misery on individuals. But under the christian dispensation, wicked men are reserved for future punishment, without the necessity or expedience of punishing the state with them.

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THUS it may be seen, that we have no authority from scripture to imagine, that God's dealings with the Jews are the measure of administering his care over other states; or that those offences which frequently brought destruction and slaughter on that nation, has the same tendency to provoke his indignation against us. Thus whatever might have been peculiar to them, who were under the immediate inspection and perpetual guidance of providence, cannot be closely applied to any other nation, in the present disposition of things.

THE question therefore is, whether states are subject to the mercies and judgments of God, and whether they are not punished and rewarded according to their merit? And whoever has examined with attention the history of the world, or surveys with observation the revolutions of empires in the present age of mankind, can have little reason to doubt, that there is a superior power which inspects the motion of political as well as individual prosperity. Nothing is more reasonable to conclude, than that vice and impiety, in their natural  
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consequence, occasion the inevitable ruin of a state. Thus whoever observes the course of God's providence towards the people of Israel, will find them either prosperous or afflicted, as piety and virtue flourished or declined among them; for thus Achior states their case to Holofernes, in the apocryphal book of Judith\*. The old world is recorded as an illustrious memorial of God's wrath against the children of disobedience, when he brought a deluge over the whole earth, because all flesh was corrupted. Such was also the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. †Moses ascribes the ruin of the seven nations to their sins, whom the children of Israel were to dispossess. Dreadful too had been the fate of the great and populous city of Nineveh, had not every one at the preaching of Jonah turned from his evil way, and made his repentance both as public and as universal as his crimes‡. The prosperity of the Roman empire, says §a holy father, was in a great degree attributed to their virtues; their love of justice, temperance, and libe-

\* Judith v. 17. † Deut. ix. 5. ‡ Jonah iii. 10.

§ His moribus meruerunt [Romani] ut Deus verus quamvis eum non colerent, eorum augeret imperium.

St. Augustine, lib. de Civit. Dei. v. c. 12.



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rality, their innocent ambition and indefatigable industry, at first procured and so long preserved the glory of their empire. The true God, although they did not adore him, enlarged their dominions; and so long as they maintained their ancient virtue, they were successful and flourished: but when a long prosperity had corrupted their manners, and the vices of those nations they had subdued were grown popular among them, they were soon convulsed by anarchy and discord, and the hand of Providence wrought their ruin. These terrors of the Lord are in a great degree necessary, to preserve the honour and majesty of the divine laws, and to check the insolence and presumption of daring sinners. These are *the banks that stay the proud waves of wickedness*, and confine the actions of men within proper limits. *When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

BUT were God, as some vainly imagine, only an idle spectator of human actions, wholly unconcerned at sublunary affairs, and altogether involved in the contemplation of his own excellencies; yet even then,

then, the natural tendency of vice and impiety is to misery and pain. Terrible is that course of wickedness, which consists in a contempt of the authority, or neglect of the duties of religion; thus removing the strongest basis of society; disregarding the dread of divine punishment for evil; ridiculing the external obligation of oaths, which is the essential security of the magistrate, and the internal obligation of conscience, which is the essential security of the people. Immorality and vice openly attack, and vitally disarrange the peace of society: luxury and avarice become the popular disorders of the community, and directly lead to ruin and misery. The national wealth, one of the most considerable fountains of internal strength, becomes thus gradually exhausted, or partially distributed; and the personal vigour of the people, another security of the comfort and prosperity of a state, becomes either enervated by misapplied wealth, or debased by sordid poverty. Hence arises a train of evils, too important to be despised, and too numerous to be repeated; and hence succeeds the destruction of a government.

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THAT a nation cannot be either safe or happy without enjoying the protection, and maintaining the religion of God, is a truth which operated powerfully in the appointment of the present solemnity; and we are wretchedly insensible of our languishing condition, and of the just anger of Heaven, if we see not abundant reason to urge us to an early and universal repentance. Supposing the world to be governed by his providence, we must acknowledge the necessity of his protection in the success of any enterprize; and *\*happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, happy are the people who have the Lord for their God.* No counsel can prosper in opposition to his wisdom, which setting before him in one view all the labyrinths and secret motions of nature, cannot fail to discern the proper means and instruments to compass whatever he intends; or to baffle and annihilate whatever projects and contrivances are repugnant to his will. The hearts of kings, the thoughts of counsellors, and the spirits of soldiers, are equally subject to his unerring controul.

\* Psalm cxliv. 15.

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LET us compare the Supreme providence, and the safety of a nation under this refuge with the imbecility and deceitfulness of human supports, which can neither bear the weight of our confidence, or justify our reliance on them. In the numberless vicissitudes and perpetual confusion of the world, on what creature can we repose our assurance? Where can national safety be placed but in some over-ruling cause? Not in military preparations, for these may be ineffectual; not in confederacies and alliances, for these may prove inconstant; not in the wisdom of statesmen, for they may be divided, and their *\*counsel turned into foolishness*; not in the authority of princes, for the reins of government and the sword of justice may be wrested out of their hands. This, therefore, is the only solid foundation upon which public security can stand; *†truly in vain is salvation to be hoped for from the mountains, or from any created eminence; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.*

\* 2 Samuel xv. 31.

† Jeremiah iii. 23.

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As religion is the greatest improvement of human nature, and distinguishes it more than all endowments of reason; so that which establishes in man the most honourable character, must in proportion increase the lustre of a community. Learning and sciences, conquest and civilization, are certainly glorious to nations; but piety and virtue are more splendid attainments, and chiefly become a christian kingdom. Religion, by a natural tendency, promotes temporal peace and prosperity, and the atheist himself is constrained to allow it, for he builds the very scheme of his principles upon this supposition. What can truly be happier than for princes and magistrates to *\*rule in the fear of God*, and to imitate him in clemency, gentleness, and equity; for subjects to be peaceable, humble, innocent, and affectionate towards one another; for all ranks and orders of men to be active in discharging the duties of their respective stations? This is only what christianity teaches, that every man may incline in his proper sphere to advance the good of society. It is the property of vice

\* 2 Samuel xxiii. 3.

to eat into the bowels of a kingdom, and to draw after it a long train of misery and calamity; but *\*religion is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her*, and a particular benefit of it is the *†healing of nations*. It was no unreasonable demand to God, *‡Lord, wilt thou slay a righteous nation?* for it certainly is not agreeable to the maxims of his governing providence; but as he punishes societies in this world for their public iniquities, so he equally rewards them for their exemplary virtues. This, therefore, is an aphorism too obvious to be contradicted, that *§righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*.

THUS, as pure and uncorrupted religion is the greatest blessing of mankind, as united into public communities, what more naturally follows, than that they make it their principal consideration. Nothing is more valuable to good men, than what they expect in a better world; they will therefore charitably desire for others, what they justly prize for themselves. If there be no competition between the pleasures of this

\* Proverbs iii. 18.

† Genesis xx. 4.

‡ Revelations xxii. 2.

§ Proverbs xiv. 34.



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life and those of eternity, and if no man can be content to hazard the loss of his immortal soul that he may *\*gain the whole world*, it is an easy consequence, that though a nation be surrounded with all that luxury can desire, and stand, *like the garden of the Lord*, full of health, of prosperity, and plenty, yet it is in effect a barren and disconsolate wilderness, if it enjoy not the light of religion. For, though God may sometimes permit impious nations to flourish, it is not from a sense of his pleasure, but for the execution of his justice, or for other secret purposes, which are folded up among the mysterious counsels of his all-wise and inscrutable providence. Religion is the greatest comforter in all distresses, and creates an inward serenity amidst all the tempestuous disturbances of life. † *In the multitude of my thoughts*, said the pensive Psalmist, *thy comforts refresh my soul*.

LET us then neither impiously reject, nor disdainfully under-value revealed religion; treat it neither with the wantonness of derision, nor with the curiosity and pride

\* Matthew xvi. 26.

† Psalms xciv. 19.

of scepticism. Let us not listen with avidity to those who take pleasure in reviling the scriptures, that charter of our salvation; who cast unseemly reflections upon them for their unadorned style, and for their disagreement with theoretic systems of philosophy; who aver that they contain no mysteries unintelligible to reason, and that the knowledge of them is not necessary to salvation. Are not these some of the public sins, which this day is devoted to bewail? and will it not become our zeal to annihilate this spirit of infidelity and impiety, in defence of the word of God, and the oracles of life? Peace, charity, and mutual communion are the original conditions of the christian church; and if it be divided by groundless jealousies and unreasonable contentions, it is not properly that body of which our Saviour was the head. *If ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another:* and thus were the Jews, in the final devastation of their city and temple, which was precipitated more by the factions within the walls, than by the Roman armies without.

IT is a very consolatory reflection, that, although the desolation of a country is the  
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certain consequence of vice and impiety, yet it is in the power of a people to avert the dreadful calamities impending over the state where such evils are practised, by a speedy course of piety, justice, and sobriety; by the exercise of which, as nations arrive at their greatness, so, by the constant exertion of it, do they continue in the favour and protection of Providence. There may be many instances, where, in states as well as in individuals, impiety has flourished with impunity, and at length has escaped the vengeance of heaven. But this affords us no sanction for any vice derogatory of national or personal integrity. The unlimited goodness of a gracious God can neither be circumscribed nor doubted. Whenever, therefore, societies are rewarded or punished according to the moral merit or demerit attending them, it is for the sake of example to future ages, that the sense of a divine providence in a thoughtless and profligate world may be confirmed and perpetuated. In a society, where, by an established national religion, the Deity is revered *in spirit and in truth*, and where the laws of equity and justice are impartially administered, equally regarding the cause of the  
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opulent and the needy ; where vice and profaneness are not only discouraged, but legally punished ; there can be no transaction which can render it obnoxious to the indignation of the Almighty, but what concerns its intercourse with neighbouring powers, in its contempt or disregard of national faith. Let the conduct of Great Britain be examined, and her several connections by treaty with other states, or her various commercial interests be tried, and it will not easily be proved, that, to preserve the sanctity of a treaty unimpaired, or to resent the infraction of it ; that to save the country from internal convulsions, or to rid it of secret and hostile combinations, can expose the state to the thunder of Omnipotence, or subject it to eternal destruction. Neither reason nor religion will forbid us from taking every vigorous measure in our power for the security of our property, the honour of our character, or the preservation of our liberty. If, after all proper endeavours for the continuance of peace have proved unsuccessful, and we are necessitated by these considerations to arm ourselves in such a cause, who can pronounce us either impious or sanguinary ? And what is there



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that shall thus prevent us from appealing for justice to the throne of him, whose dominion is over all the earth? There is the same obligation of conscience to maintain, and the same disgrace attendant upon the neglect of national treaties, as arise in the common transactions of life, and in the mutual intercourse between man and man; and no consideration of profit, no temptation of advantage should allure us to forget the sanctity of a covenant, where the peace and honour of a nation are concerned, and where the neglect of it would leave an indelible stain upon the character of those who formed it, and of those who allow the infringement of it. There can be no contract more sacred than that which binds the interests, and involves the security, of nations.

WAR, at all times, in whatever point of view we examine it, whether considered with respect to religion, to politics, or to humanity, is the most calamitous event that can befall a country, however just may be the cause, or however profitable the success of it. But when our security is endangered by a foreign force, and our liberty is insulted

insulted by domestic conspirators; when there are causes which operate upon us, no less than the extinction of our laws, the destruction of our persons, and the usurpation of our properties; when the enjoyments most dear and valuable to us, as men and as christians, are wantonly menaced, and forcibly invaded, what consideration shall dispose us to forget, that self-defence is a duty; and that we are called upon by every tie of private justice and of public faith to exert every nerve in so important and perilous a contest. To act with indifference in a moment of such danger, would justly expose us to the utmost rigour which an enraged and infatuated enemy can inflict.\*

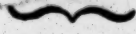
THIS public act of devotion to God is therefore seasonably and confidently observed; and the merciful Omnipotence of heaven is now invoked, not on the arms of rapine, of fraud, or of injustice, but of self-defence, of public faith, and personal liberty.

\* *Belligerare malis videtur felicitas, bonis necessitas.*

*St. AUGUSTINE.*



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THAT our intercession may be more acceptable, and the issue of it more efficacious, let us be exhorted individually to turn from our impieties, that the remainder of our lives may be dedicated to religion and virtue. Such was the immediate purpose of this solemn act of humiliation; in which we are invited to bow down our souls and bodies before the mighty hand of God; to deprecate his wrath by a serious resolution of amendment, and a hearty confession of our sins. As certainly as the pursuit of vice and practice of impiety directly lead to the ruin of a people, so certainly will the contrary practice of piety and virtue, with a sorrowful contrition for our past offences, reconcile us to the favour of that God, whose benignity is visible in all his transactions with mankind; and who has promised to receive into his paternal bosom the humble and the contrite. The preservation of our present happy constitution is so vitally threatened by our vices, and the enjoyment of whatever is valuable so fatally endangered by it, that the time is well appointed for the recollection of ourselves. Let us therefore emancipate ourselves from that disgraceful and epidemic

epidemic spirit of libertinism, which pervades every rank of society, which is the pest of a civilized and enlightened people, and a dishonour to humanity. And let us return with singleness of heart, to that simplicity of manners, that decency of dress, that moderation of diet, that temperance of pleasures, that equity in trade, that sincerity of conversation which so eminently distinguished the character of our forefathers. Let us no longer continue in that open enmity to all that is honourable and praise-worthy, in that neglect or contempt of the public ordinance of religion, into which we are so frequently betrayed. But let us speedily revert to that strictness of piety, and exercise that reverence for religion, by which they were in a great degree animated to form, and enabled to sustain the principles on which the constitution was raised.

BUT that our contrition may be more available, when we offer up supplications for the peace, the prosperity, and the security of ourselves, let us not forget to pray for our enemies; and that they may speedily return to a proper sense of justice and  
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of truth. Let us be disposed to commiserate, and not to condemn, their weaknesses; let us be inclined to pardon, rather than to censure the prejudices of their opinions, and the injustice of their actions. And let us add the event of that cause which we maintain, to the wonderful blessings which we already receive from that bountiful benefactor, *whose mercy is over all his works*; and who, although he humbles our pride, will compassionate our infirmities, relieve our necessities, and accept our repentance. By this we shall engage the divine favour both to ourselves and to our country; we shall give credit and reputation to virtue and religion. We know the great importance of such conduct too sensibly, when we are assured, that for the sake of ten righteous persons God would have remitted the destruction of Sodom. Let us then be so far friends to ourselves, as to pray for the happiness of all men: let our own lives be regular and pious, and our example will encourage the regularity and piety of others. Let us break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by works of mercy and repentance, which will confirm us in that tranquility, that is beyond

beyond the power of man to disturb; for God has declared to us, that *the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness, and assurance for ever.*

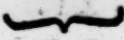
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So necessary is the paternal protection of God to nations as well as to persons, let us speedily endeavour to secure it: and let our repentance prepare us for this blessing. Let us be early in expiating our national sins, the foes that lurk within our gates, and are most dangerous to us; and what those sins are, it is the employment of this day impartially to enquire, and to dispossess them, if it can be done, by humiliation and prayer. There is indeed among us such a strange mixture of hypocrisy with prophaneness; of spiritual sins with carnal impurities; of nice scrupulosity in trifles, with no conscience in matters more important; of contending about forms, with despising all private and social worship; of a disguised zeal with bold irreligion, that it is not easily discernable where we are to begin in the necessary plan of reformation. But it is an infallible rule, that every man must begin with himself. Let us then de-  
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XI.  


clare the pre-eminence of the christian religion, by the constancy of our worship, the integrity of our manners, and the universality of our charity. Let us demean ourselves with piety and devotion towards God, benevolence and concord towards all men, obedience and fidelity to the King, duty and respect to the laws, that we may sustain our characters in the world, unfulled by the breath of suspicion, and dignified by self-approbation; and let us bear that tenderness and compassion towards those that are seduced from us, on any occasion whatever, which may tend to the honour and support of that excellent religion, of which we are members. If we think our religion superior to any other in the world, let not those who have a worse, exceed us in any virtue; let us strive to excel them in peacefulness and moderation, in probity and temperance, in zeal and integrity, in the fruits of piety and mercy; and let all contentions cease, but those of obeying God, and doing good to mankind. We might thus raise a temple of peace, which would endure through many generations; and we might then witness probably the completion of many glorious prophecies,

cies, which now our vices seem to retard. But such a period, if it be above our present hope, is not above our faith, nor above our prayers. It is at least in our own power, with the ordinary succours of divine grace, to make the world much more happy, and ourselves better men; we must atone for the blemishes of the last age, by a careful reformation of the present, and then *Ephraim will not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim*; then there will be *no hurting nor destroying in God's holy mountain*; then *mercy and truth will meet together, righteousness and peace will kiss each other*; and then we shall be prepared to hear the great voice out of heaven; *Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

FINIS.